

ED'S RANTO3.04

#### **ED'S RANT**



#### A POUND OF FLESH

I'm in Southern California, the kingdom of flesh. Muscular middle-aged men with furrowed hair implants wearing grey tank tops drive drop-top BMWs south down the 405 freeway to meet their tanned, surgically altered girlfriends. In the heart of Orange County—"the OC," a region mirrored by its own television series—is Anaheim. Flesh is fantasy in this city that Walt Disney built with fairy dust and Mexican labor. Anaheim, a city that jacked the name "angels" for their Major League baseball team, a city of groomed concrete and neon-lit strip malls that traps its inhabitants in a Wagnerian dream state. This is Bush country, where SUVs cruise wide, four-lane avenues and the center of town is a convention center that could house two Zeppelins.

Inside the Anaheim Convention Center on the weekend of January 16-18 was NAMM, the International Music Products Association's business convention. Companies like Roland, Gibson, Ludwig, Native Instruments, Stanton and Technics show off their wares in a frenzy of seminars, sales meetings and handshakes. This is where people who make electronic gear come to sell their stuff to the media, to stores, to anyone who'll listen.

PowerPoint screens glow with lists of attractive features, while elsewhere Glen Danzig signs autographs at a guitar manufacturer's booth. "Is this where people get the tools to make electronic music?," I wondered. If so, NAMM is one of the many reasons dance music sounds more commodified and less radical by the day.

Almost every booth in the electronics wing of the convention center was hawking some sort of "make music instantly" or "plug it in and you're a perfect DJ" type of software or machine. I have nothing against access to improved technologies or bringing simple music tools to the masses, but when these companies assume the kind of music we want to make (trance, hip-hop and electro-breaks, judging by the majority of gear presets and booth demos I saw), it worries me. It's like making a guitar that only plays rock. DJ equipment giant Gemini, on the other hand, didn't leave anything to the imagination—they simply had Vivid Video girls signing autographs at their booth all day.

Like an oasis in this orgy of techno-capitalism was the booth of SF software developers Cycling '74. Compared to the other mega-footprint towers and castles of sound around it, C74's tiny booth area was like having the comfort of your living room in the middle of a lush public park. The booth was no more than some plain carpeting, a modest amount of computers and the funkiest music nerds waiting to explain their ultra-complex software. C74 isn't for everyone—it's hard to learn, and that's what made this company stand out. When every other business's pitch was to hand out candy in search of a quick sale, I got the impression C74 was concerned more with explaining the philosophy of what they do in a friendly, unassuming way. I found myself stuck like Velcro to their booth's general vicinity, listening like a fly-on-the-wall, just to escape the vapid noise of the rest of the convention floor.

Still, it was a privilege to be among the music technology elite, to casually scan companies big and small, many of whom share the same passion about music that I do, and who've gone the extra step of creating the means to make music. That's why talking about the business of music and the creative process will never be an easy thing.

Assembling this issue of XLR8R-dedicated to maverick artists who experiment and challenge the status quo-proved to me that even when you think you know everything about a style, a genre or an artist, you don't. There were the usual challenges of doing a magazine-artists not smilling in photo shoots, artists not liking their photo shoots at all, features dropping at the last minute, review materials lost in the mail, late reviews, all-night editing sessions-you name it, it happened. But you know what? We got someone to dress up as a hot dog and go out clubbing all night (see the triumphant crew above), and that's a part of our culture that'll you'll never be able to pre-program or commodify-our ability to be weird. This issue is dedicated to those who dare to be weird with us. Stay up late, stay involved, stay strange.

-Tomas





# vikter duplaix



The new album from Philly neo-soul hero Vikter Duplaix...bringing together two innovative years of rare b-sides and remixes on one collection.

"Seductive without the sleaze, Vikter Duplaix is a D'Angelo for the drum n bass set ... and brims with infectious optimism." – Interview
"Beauty is the order of the day with Duplaix." – Vibe

#### **IN STORES FEBRUARY 2004**





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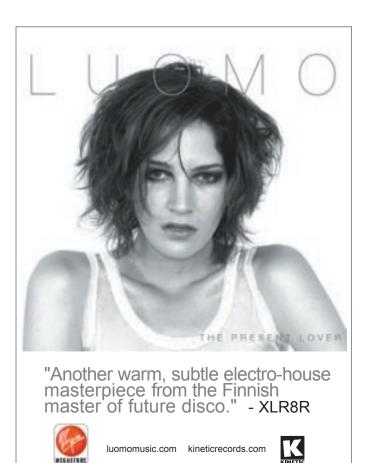


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Hether is not only good with brushes and thangs, but she is also calm as Calgon, even when street people are trying to get her phone number. In this issue, she did make-up and hair for our "Hot Dog!" photo shoot, in between giving tips on how to craft the perfect "smoky eye." When she's not wrangling sausage, Hether specializes in commercial work. editorial and film. She has also worked with Fischerspooner. www.workgroup-Itd.com

#### MARCUS CLACKSON



London-based Marcus has shot for NME, Jockey Slut, Flux, The Independent, music labels and other stuff. The high points of his career include shooting Norman Jay, being told to fuck off by The Fall's Mark E Smith, shooting Maurice Fulton in a little black dress and pink football socks (him, not Marcus) and getting his first cover shot, of 4Hero, in XLR8R.



Lost in a chemical haze for most of the '90s, LA-based Chris Muniz (a.k.a. DJ Nightstalker) has finally managed to keep his feet on the ground long enough to become a music journalist and one of the players in the Stateside drum & bass scene. Regularly appearing in mags like XLR8R, URB, Rinse. Vice, and Knowledge, Chris is currently at work on his first novel and making his

#### TOPH ONE



When veteran XLR8R staffer (since 1995!) Toph One isn't out drinking martinis with the Herb Caen Martini Society, eating super burritos or stalking the ghosts of old San Francisco, he's being harassed by Ron Nachmann to turn in his Lucky 13 column. Yet even after being up all night drinking tequila shots and throwing dope parties at 111 Minna, Dalva and the Endup, he manages to pull it together enough to pen

beautiful elegies to our fair city. This issue, in between beard grooming and a busy DJ schedule, Toph also found time to speak to Keith Knight, creator of K Chronicles.



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#### **LETTERS**

LIKE US? HATE US? WRITE US! 1388 HAIGHT ST #105, SAN FRANCISCO CA 94117 All letters printed "as is."



DEEP COVER

s do XLR8R n the past, this one takes the cake!

To be honest, I never thought your other "artistic" covers worked that well as magazine

covers...but Abigail's Party did you guys up

#### **CROSS-EYED** YI DADe

Luv va. Big fan. Me like mag. But what's with the illegible "this track is from" text on the INCITE CD track listing? Usually it's just aggravatingly super tiny, but #17 was dotmatrix pattern black on grey. Criminy! I thought the point of the disc is to clue us to find the albums by these artists? "Increase Font Size"-I bet there's a keyboard shortcut. Tony Brooke

#### HEAD GAMES

Hey XLR8R,

From the "Best of 2003" issue (#73, December 2003), I am a bit curious why you consider Radiohead's latest release to be the

worst album of 2003. First off, the album was voted at number three from the College Music Journal's top ten albums of the year, determined by the hundreds of college radio stations who report to CMJ. Second, if you had the opportunity to see Radiohead in concert and observe how amazingly they pull off their studio sounds live, you might have a second opinion about this album. My advice is to go back and listen to the CD again, because Worst Album of 2003 isn't the title it deserves.

On another note, keep up the good work. I always look forward for the newest issue to hit the stands. Skyler Engberg

#### Tomas responds:

Skyler-no doubt Radiohead are an amazing band with a catalog of superb albums and an engaging live show. But they're not beyond critique, and our Best of 2003 poll was just that-readers, experts and industry heads telling us what they thought of music and culture over the past year. More than a few people reacted with disappointment to Hail To The Thief (jeez, what a bumper-sticker slogan that is) and we were glad to print their opinion. You have yours. Hooray for democracy.



#### ISSUE 74 CORRECTIONS

In album reviews. we failed to mention that the record Poverty DeLuxe is by Tone Theory vs. Oneiro (one of Derrick Carter's Also in album reviews,

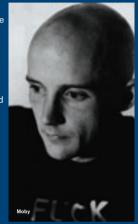
not credited as being one half of Telefon Tel Aviv (with partner Joshua Eustis).

#### BITTER BASTARD'S CRYSTAL BALLS

ITTER BAST

BJ "Bitter Bastard" presents ten unfortunate predictions and absolute truths for the rest of 2004, the year of the monkey.

- 1. Moby will make a new, straightforward techno dance record as Voodoo Ray, but everyone will confuse it with a Guru Josh record from 10
- 2. If cell phones disappeared tomorrow, everyone would realize what cell-phone pockets are really best for: silver flasks.
- 3. I've never actually heard Audio Bullys, but I can tell they suck by their name and photos alone.





- 4. If crunk is music for the strip club DJ that gets laid every night, then minimal echno is music for the single 30-something watching porn
- 5. The Dizzee Rascal backlash has begun. Or is it already over now?
- 6. "Subversive" transition record used by novice '80s DJs after playing an hour of Madonna, ABC and Wham: Musical Youth's "Pass The Dutchie," a song about sharing a stew kettle.



7. Fact: Northwest rock band names (Mudhoney, Pretty Girls Make Graves, Bikini Kill) destroy New York rock band names (The Strokes, The Liars, The Warlocks) period. Yeah Yeah Yeahs? Yawn, yawn, yawn.



8. Fact #2: Funk always trounces rock. Don't be amazed if by the end of 2004 everyone sounds like

9. Dutch trance is the torture method of choice used by US soldiers interrogating Saddam.

10. The Rapture backlash should only last a few more months. DFA haz-mat mop-up teams are on the scene of th



#### XLR8R'S "STEREO HI-FI" CONTEST

Few bands have done more for the indie/electronic crossover than the UK's Stereolab. They released an LP each year between 1992 and 2002, kicking off their career with the '60s futurist grooves of Space Age Batchelor Pad Music before moving through the groundbreaking electronic scapes of Dots and Loops onto the essential Strange Fruit, a collection of 33 tracks from their sessions at the BBC's Radio One. Their new record, Margerine Eclipse (Elektra), is rife with analog experimentation and lush pop melodies, and you can win it for yourself. Ten lucky readers will get their very own copy of Margerine Eclipse on vinyl and a Stereolab t-shirt, and all you have to do is answer these three easy questions:

- 1. What was the name of the mini-LP Stereolab released in 2000?
- 2. What is the name of singer Laetitia Sadier's side project?
- 3. What's playing on your hi-fi right now?

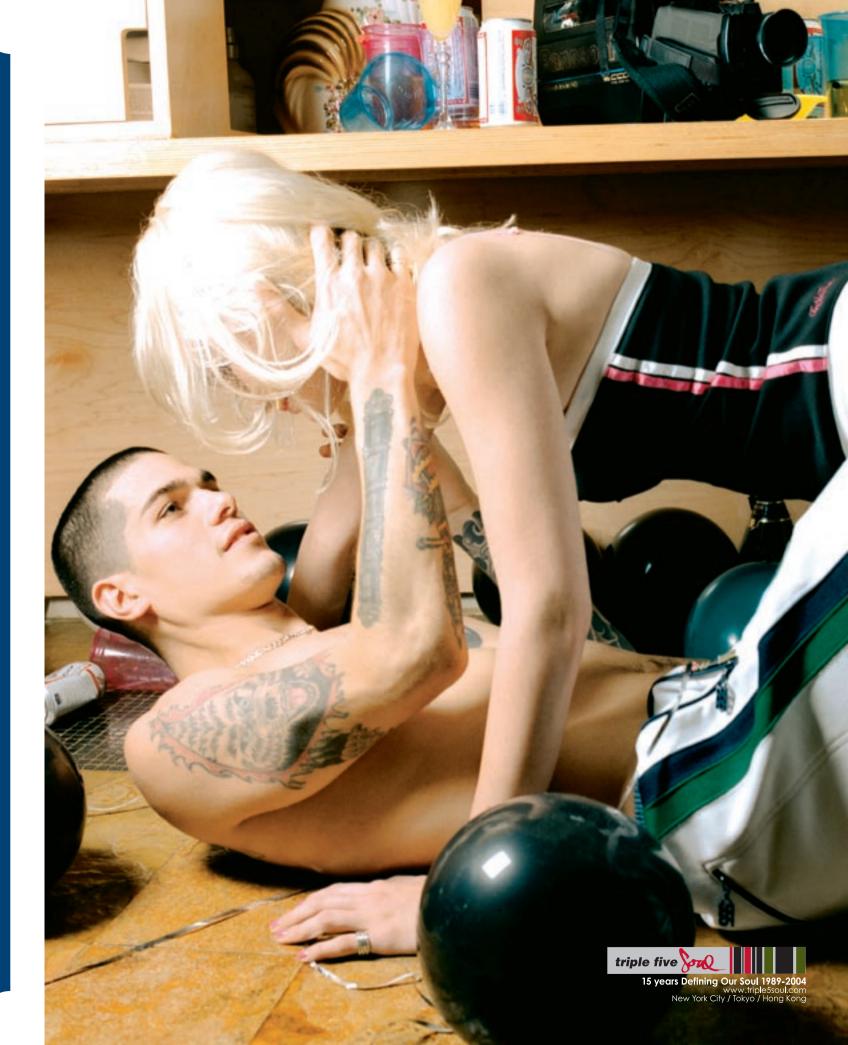


Ten winners will receive a copy of Margerine Eclipse on vinyl and a Stereolab

Entries will be accepted via mail and email. Send your answers to XLR8R's "Stereo Hi-Fi" contest, 1388 Haight St. #105, San Francisco, CA 94117 or email them to contest@xlr8r.com. Include your name, return address and email address when you enter. Entries must be received by April 15, 2004.

Elektra

www.stereolab.co.uk. www.elektra.com



PREFIX Words Brion Paul Image Michael Regan



#### BIG DADA'S NEW SIGNING DELIVERS HIS OWN SONG OF THE SOUTH.

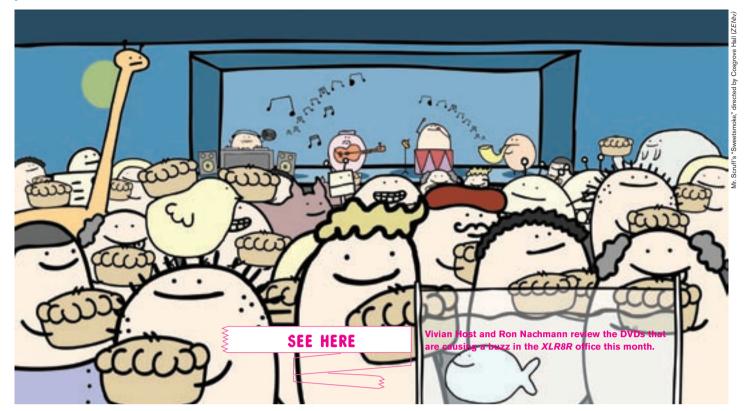
There's no better music to get crunk to than a genre-ignoring, status quo-eradicating mix of Dirty South bounce, astigmatism-curing psych rock, forgotten freestyle favorites and a little PJ Harvey. And who better to provide the soundtrack to a night of drunken, NC-17 Twister than Hollertronix—the alias of Philadelphia DJ duo Diplo and Low Budget. The two gathered a massive grassroots following earlier this year, stemming from *Never Scared*, a self-produced mix album that brought them to the zenith of Mt. Hipster Hoopla. The CD also brought Diplo (born Wes Gully) to the attention of Big Dada, who will release an album of Dip's original productions, *Bounce Aesthetic–Stories About Florida*, in June.

"[With Hollertronix], we were trying to capitalize on the whole electroclash/rock revival and keep it gutter at the same time. That didn't work, but we managed to make the crowd really diverse and create something totally new," Diplo explains. The productive 25-year-old has amassed a straight-A track record of releases, of which the scattershot sample-deploying "Epistemology Suite" is the gleaming crown jewel.

Born in Mississippi and raised in South Florida, Tennessee, South Carolina, Alabama and Philly, Diplo's done his fair share of geographic hop-scotching, which gives his meta-blinged beats a Southern nomad's mystique. "My father was always taking jobs in other cities and just moving our family around," he elaborates. "I really saw the South fully by being all over the place-the idiosyncrasies of a big city like Nashville, some tiny dirt town in Alabama, some Miami shit. It was down there in Florida, the first real city we lived in just around Ft. Lauderdale, that I remember skipping middle school to see the reggae parties at the parks every Friday-real soundsystem shit. I think I got attacked by a badger at that park, too. Have you ever seen one of those? They are scary as shit-biggest teeth in the world and they move as fast as the wind, like little speedy rabid carpets. Anyway, I was just listening to all the freestyle out there on the radio, fascinated by music and animals, building tree houses and [visiting] strip club cafes in Ocala that are open 24 hours. That's some pretty magical Florida shit.

"I'm trying to make music about the South," Diplo notes. "[My album is] a good summation of my influences: psych rock, Three 6 Mafia, ragga. [With] every track, I'm trying to make a new genre, just pushing my lil' studio to the limit. [It's] Dirty South magical realism."]

Bounce Aesthetic-Stories About Florida will be released on Big Dada in June. www.bigdada.com





#### THE BATTLE FOR L.A.: FOOTSOLDIERS VOL. 1

Redline, \$9.99; www.thebattleforla.com) f you agree that the MC battles were the only part of 8 Mile worth watching, you may enjoy watching these up-and-coming LA rappers battle it out for a prize that's little more than their friends' respect. On the bad side, The Battle for L.A. is full of grainy shots and interludes of stoned crews rambling about hip-hop culture. On the good side, there's priceless footage here of next-level breakdancing and underground freestyle battles-and the next Aceyalone or Busdriver might be in here somewhere. VH



#### STOKED: THE RISE AND FALL OF GATOR

(Palm Pictures, \$24.99; www.palmpictures.com) Stoked follows the story of Vision Street Wear's pride and joy, Mark "Gator" Rogowski, as he goes from egotistical skate rat to egotistical skate superstar to somewhat psychopathic-seeming murderer. As in *Dogtown*, the classic footage is gripping, and promises to fill you with nostalgia for the late '80s; the story, however, never delves too deep into Gator's psyche. VH



#### IN DVD (Mute/Spoon, \$49.98;

www.spoonrecords.com

Many music geeks know about German rock band Can's influence on post-'60s future-rhythmic music, but there's been precious little visual documentation of them, until now. This bulging package offers up over four hours of live and interview video footage, and an hour-long audio CD of various solo works by the band's members. It's worth it just to see primordial long-haired singer Damo Suzuki live circa 1972, head-banging to the krautrock madness in a pink and red velvet jumpsuit. RN



#### grueling three years to make this effortless-seeming and endlessly watchable skate video featuring the best of the Girl and Chocolate teams. Eric Koston,

Rick McCrank, Gino lannucci and more don't need midgets, "extreme" boobs and dumb stunts to be entertaining, just a good soundtrack, clean shots, and plenty of kickflips and railslides done with finesse and personality. VH

**YEAH RIGHT!** (Girl, \$19.95; www.girlskateboards.com)

Spike Jonze, Ty Evans and Cory Weincheque took a



#### OFFBEAT: 13 MUSIC-BASED MINIMUM MOVIES (EFA-Emotion, \$16.95; www.89mm.com)

On Offbeat, Berlin short-film collective 89mm reimagines music by Christoph de Babalon, Anthony Röther, Swag and more. You may be asking yourself what the difference between short films and music videos is? Image quality and depth of concept, it appears. Highlights include Michaela Spohn's rivetingly beautiful cityscape collages and the provocative belly dancing bunny Sabine Rollnik and Eva Kietzmann create a to accompany Angie Reed's storytelling on "Habibi." VH



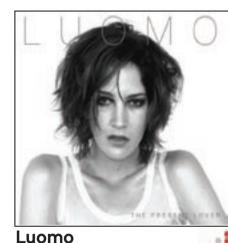
#### **ZENTU** (Ninja Tune, \$19.99; www.ninjatune.com) Remember when Ninia Tune artists' videos were

the highlight of digital video event Resfest? So do I. But in 2004, a lot of the animation and collage work that used to seem groundbreaking next to TLC's "Waterfalls" doesn't anymore. No matter, for every old school Coldcut or Funki Porcini video on this "greatest hits" DVD, there's something like Mark Roche's rooster love story for Pest's "Chicken Spit" or the crazy cut 'n' paste safari AKFF! creates for Jaga Jazzist's "Animal Chin". Ninja fans and those without MTV2 are advised to tune in, smoke up and

# **VIRGIN MEGASTORES SALUTES WINTER MUSIC CONFERENCE 2004!**



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The Present Lover \$11.99 CD



l ikes... \$13.99 CD



**Various Artists** WaveTec One \$12.99 CD

Virgin salutes the DJs, labels, clubs and promoters who continue to be dedicated to the inspiring, vibrant scene. Our thanks to the contributions they have made all year long from blistering dance floor highs to sultry downtempo grooves.

Jeff Mills and WaveTec One on sale 2/24 - 3/22. Dan Siciliano on sale 1/27 - 3/15. Jeff Mills on sale 2/17 - 3/15. Prices may vary online @ virginmega.com.

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PREFIX Words Tomas Palermo Image Laurie Wilson



# CLEVELAND'S CONTRARY PRODUCTION MAESTRO DEFIES HOUSE CONVENTIONS.

Cleveland's 36-year-old Warren Harris—who records as Hanna—thrives on his contradictions. His most recent recordings—thoroughly gossamer house productions—have caused a strong buzz in the dance community, yet he cites jackhammer junglist Twisted Individual as one of the only artists he currently listens to. "You probably won't believe this, but I don't listen to house music," says Harris. "I'm a drum & bass head. I like the dark UK stuff. Bad Company, Total Science, Technical Itch."

Hanna has been producing since 1998, when his first single, "Freshglow," was released on friend and musical co-conspirator Dan Curtin's Metamorphic label. Since then, he's conjured up over 15 singles and four albums on such far-flung labels as London's Freerange, Frankfurt's Séparé and

Tokyo's Sublime. This understated producer, who considers himself "a house version of LTJ Bukem," also logs time in Theo Parrish's Rusty Waters collective and plays with the Cleveland Symphony Orchestra.

Despite his wide range of styles and influences, Harris doesn't make any claims to musical open-mindedness. "I'm not the cat that likes everything," he states bluntly. "There's a whole mindset to the music I'm making that goes against the grain of what is popular. I've [had] this [approach] for years. I hate the blues. I hate blues-sounding records. I'm really [harmonically] deviating from standard progressions and I'm going somewhere different, and it's by design. Every chord you hear is deliberate. It's not that I make tracks from a negative [place]. But I consciously try and avoid things that people are used to hearing."

To date, Harris has painstakingly used his technique to craft albums of techy broken beat (Severance), passionate house

(Glamorous) and atmospheric drum & bass (Scarlet Manifesto). And let's not forget Contemplating Jazz, a full length on Bret Dancer's Track Mode label. "The title is [taken] from the poem 'Howl' by Allen Ginsberg," Harris explains. "The album is like an artistic church service, provoking one to think deeper. No screaming and shouting-sit still, listen, contemplate jazz."

Indeed, much of Hanna's music is divinely inspired. That's especially true of tracks like "The Race" (Freerange), which originates from the Psalm that reads "the race is not given to the swift." "I don't like tracks that are about *nothing*," Harris is quick to emphasize. "Everything is spiritual when it comes to [my music]."}

Look for a new album by Hanna (minimal techno this time!) on Irma Records. www.irmagroup.com COUNTY GORN THE FOR

COLLECTS SHEAK STANGON

WANTE TO KNOW WHETHE

Settler Berger









# SPEAK TOUS...

We already love you readers, but we wanna get to know you better. That's where XLR8R'S 2004 READER SURVEY comes in. We do know that you guys love prizes, so log onto www.xlr8r.com to enter the Reader Survey Contest. One grand prize winner and eleven runners up will win loads of stuff from our friends at M-Audio, Hard to Find Records, Sony Screenblast, X-Large Clothing and Ninja Tune.









M-AUDIO

PREFIX

Words Carleton Curtis Image Jessie Adams

Words Carleton Curtis Image Jessie Adams



In 2000, Montreal native Leila Pourtavaf and four friends bought an Airstream trailer right after graduating college. This wasn't just any Grand Canyon-visiting granny-mobile, but a traveling library, filled to capacity with zines and independent books and made road-worthy by New York-based design group Freecell. That summer, the Mobilivre Bookmobile traversed the East Coast of Canada and the US, bringing small press materials to communities that wouldn't otherwise be exposed to them.

This spring, the Bookmobile will set out for its fourth roadtrip. The last season featured a plethora of papery goodness, including a book of drawings and silk screens by the European GRRR GRRR collective, zines *Inkling* and *Shut Your Eyes and See* by San Fran author Melissa Klein, and a stuffed animal with a pocketful of zines by the Paperrad group of Providence, Rhode Island. There's no telling what to expect this time...except excitement. *Melissa Wheeler* 



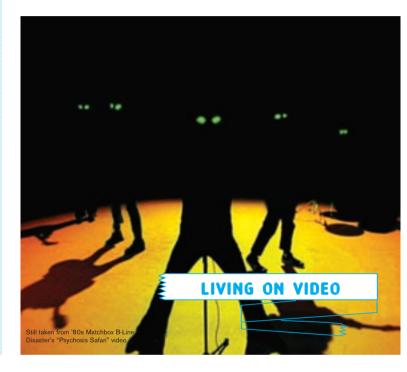
Ever fantasized about MTV playing music videos that you actually want to see? Ninja Tunes video commissioner Vez (yes, just "Vez" is what she prefers) and music video critic Jordan McGarry did too, which prompted them to start the tri-monthly Antenna night. Held at the National Film Theatre in London's arty South Bank, antenna showcases independent music videos before a panel of directors and a full house of fans. Heading discussions are luminaries like design collective Shynola–who've directed moving images for The Rapture, Blur and UNKLE–and musicians like Kieran Hebden (a.k.a. Four Tet).

Antenna previews new tracks and rarities in big-screen luxury. "We showed the painfully beautiful graphics of Lynn Fox's FC Kahuna "Hayling" video before it was shelved," says Vez. "When the track looked like it was going to be popular, they commissioned a new video with a band performance." Björk also gave the green light to screen her predictably offbeat tour visuals.

Antenna hasn't reached America yet, but it does involve US directors. "We played Ruben Fleisher's DJ Format video and people went crazy for him," explains McGarry. "He came over from LA and got commissioned [to do a video for] Dizzee Rascal."

Budding Spike Jonzes should consult Antenna's website, which has already been hit with submissions from India, Turkey, New Zealand and Brazil. "You can trainspot music and film, so why not music videos?" concludes Vez. "Why should their life be as fleeting as the promo for the track?" Anna Chapman

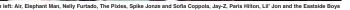
www.antennapromo.co.uk



**SPIN CYCLE** Lex Records' Dangermouse has released *The Grey Album*, using the vocals from Jay-Z's The Black Album over beats created entirely from The Beatles' The White Album • Dreamworks Records-home to artists like Nelly Furtado and The Eels-closed its doors on January 9, having been bought out by Vivendi Universal • Compost Records owner Michael Reinboth has been selected to mix the next *Trust the DJ* compilation, called *Soul Elektrisch*; Compost also has a new sublabel in the pipeline • Still movin': London's Movement drum & bass night celebrated seven years on January 8 • The Ideal Festival happens March 11-13 in Gothenburg, Sweden with Fennesz, Pan Sonic, DJ/Rupture, and more • Better than a bobsled team: Puma and VP Records (which turns 25 this year) have partnered up. Puma will be using dancehall in their pre-Olympics commercials while artists like Elephant Man will be rocking Puma's green 'n' gold line • Rockstar Games is sponsoring a contest to see who can make the best mods for Max Payne 2. Entries are due by May 15 at www.rockstargames.com • Australian psych-rockers The Sleepy Jackson embark on a US tour March 9 through May 2 • Desert hi-fi: Southern California's Coachella Festival will be held May 1 and 2 this year; The Pixies, Radiohead, Air, Kraftwerk, Prefuse 73, and The Thrills will perform • Lil' Jon and the Eastside Boys are in the studio preparing their

Dancestar USA awards will be held March 9 in Miami, FL. Paris Hilton, Cameron Douglas and Adrien Brody are nominated for the nauseating category of "Best Celebrity DJ," while Moby is set to receive an award for "Outstanding Contribution to Dance Music" • Drum & bass jock Dylan is starting a new label, Obscene Recordings, as well as helping DJ Bailey with the launch of his Intasound imprint • First divorcing Spike Jonze, now this: Sofia Coppola has plans to start a record label • Blowing up: As of press time, the Crystal Method's Legion of Boom is the top-selling album in the iTunes online store • Squarepusher and Jamie Lidell will perform their works with avant-garde symphony the London Sinfonietta at London's Royal Festival Hall on March 12 • Clear Channel recently switched LA's 103.1-formerly groundbreaking electronic music station MARS-FM and recently commercial dance music atrocity The Party-into a new "alternative indie" format • Teutonic metal monsters Rammstein recently released a career-spanning DVD called Lichtspielhaus • Ninja Tune is running a competition to find a filmmaker to make an accompaniment to Blockhead's debut album, Music By Cavelight. Enter at www.ninjatune.net • Check out free MP3s from Babu and Boo-Yaa Tribe, and interviews with Awol One and Abstract Rude at www.stronghouserecords.com • Join the revolution at www.djsonstrike.com • Lights out, camper.







# LA'S SOLID GOLD EXPERIMENTAL INDIE IMPRINT DOESN'T GIVE A FLYING FUCK WHAT YOU THINK.

It's a cold Friday morning in East Lost Angeles—not exactly prime conditions for a rock 'n' roll interview. I'm meeting with the overlords of Gold Standard Labs, a record label co-run by founder Sonny Kay and Mars Volta guitarist Omar Rodriguez-Lopez. Both are remarkably awake.

Rodriguez, a Texan via Puerto Rico, is a slight figure, shaped not unlike a candy apple: his trademark afro frames a shy, bespectacled face, while a fitted leather jacket and Miss Sixty jeans squeeze him tight from the neck down. Orating smart, tangential musings to his left is Kay, who dons all-black workwear with *noir* Just For Men hair dye saturating his shaggy mane. "I don't want to stick my neck out for a bunch of assholes or music that's trite or pointless," he says calmly.

This is the same ideology Kay maintained 10 years ago, when he started GSL out of his Boulder, Colorado bedroom. Predictably, when asked to describe the indie label's sound, Kay becomes resistant, offering militant nouns instead of frilly adjectives. "Once or twice before, I've

described GSL as 'youth culture in spite of consumer culture:" Truly, the bands on GSL don't defy categorization—they reject it altogether. Kill Me Tomorrow, The Locust, !!!, The Rapture and GoGoGo Airheart are but a smattering of the bands dotting GSL's decidedly experimental catalog.

With no legitimate punk or indie scene in Colorado during 1993, Kay wanted to shed light on the different pockets of sound in the area-hence GSL's musical disparity. "I've always seen GSL as being more aesthetically driven," Rodriguez gently affirms. "It's a bunch of really diverse people who happen to share a similar message."

The label usurped its name from Guaranteed Stafford Loans, the fabled money tree that millions of college students use to support their drug habits. But for obvious legal reasons, Kay had to drop the moniker. "But I still get my loan coupons in the mail," he laughs.

In 1996, Gold Standard Labs moved to California along with Kay's hardcore band The VSS-stopping in Berkeley and San Diego before settling in LA last year. Rodriguez entered the picture upon seeing Kay perform in Denver with

his alternate band, Angel Hair. They were instant friends, and ended up co-producing an album for Rodriguez's De Facto side project. Eventually, they became full-fledged business partners. "I've always been a fan of the label," recalls Rodriguez, "so from my point of view, it was like joining my favorite band"

After a full decade of arty, angsty, guitar-smashing releases, GSL is now dipping its toes into hip-hop. "Listening to dub and hip-hop for so many years, it was definitely something that crossed my mind," remembers Kay. "But I was really worried about looking like another dumb white guy cashing in on hip-hop, especially because the genre's so exhausted at this point."

Their maiden hip-hop release, I'm Always Recovering from Tomorrow by LA's Subtitle, has been met with trepidation thus far-sales are poor and the reviews have not been flattering. But for Kay, it's nothing to fret about, because tastemakers have been GSL's nemesis since the beginning. "Sooner or later, it will dawn on people that this is interesting music," Kay says coolly. "God knows, the same thing happened with the rest of our bands."}

www.goldstandardlabs.com



- 1. Faceplates for Vestax 06 and 06a Mixers (Audio8, \$70) Sure, turntablist/evil genius Flesh O.N.E.'s faceplates look cool, but will they improve your cuts? Quite possibly. The special stick-resistant plastic covering not only protects the art by graf heads Damon Soule (D23) and MARS, it can also improve scratch speed. www.audio8.com
- 2. DeoxIT Pen (Caig, \$13.50) You know better than to share needles, but you should also know better than to lick them. Clean your headshells and tonearms with this handy little pen to reduce headshell corrosion and enjoy improved sound (now available in both channels!). www.turntablelab.com
- 3. 45 Adapters (Soundquake, 7.71 Euros [approx. \$9.85] each) You knew that once the Germans entered the reggae game, they'd find a way to regulate the non-standard Jamaican 45 hole. At over a quarter-pound apiece, these hefty domes aren't going anywhere-plop 'em on your decks and flip an evening's worth of riddims on and off. Forward that. www.soundquake.com
- 4. Freq Factory (Opus Freq Labs; prices vary) So that's how you get bedroom scratch DJs out of the house. The Freq Factory is the world's first portable scratch-practice tool, featuring a movable mini-platter, adjustable crossfader and digital pitches and tones. Each unit is handmade and customizable, and comes in digital or analog. www.opusfreqlabs.com
- 5. 45 Sleeves (Wisdom Records; \$6 per 25) As long as you're runnin' riddims on 45, you might as well keep them organized and I-tected with these Jamaican-made Rasta-rific 45 sleeves. They're heavier than normal sleeves and have the added bonus of reggae-centric graphics. Haile recommended. www.wisdomrecordssf.com
- **6. Rasta Towel (Wisdom Records; \$5)** This ites, gold and green towel will not only mop up your sweat as you get the dancefloor in a bashment frenzy, it can also help you signal di plane, fan dem off and-in extreme cases-function as a parachute (parachutel). www.wisdomrecordssf.com



New Jersey's Josh Milan and Kevin Hedge—better known as underground production duo Blaze—may not currently register high on the hipster radar, but they keep doing their thing with passion anyway. Why? For the love of house music. Pulsing 4/4s are the backdrop of their benefit compilation, *Keep Hope Alive* (King Street/ West End Records), as well as their forthcoming album, *Blaze Jazz*. With almost 20 years experience writing uplifting songs like "If You Should Need A Friend"—and with close to 100 new tracks waiting to be released—we asked Blaze what keeps them burning. They chose to talk about their place in the universe. And before you jaded cynics dismiss them as washed-up hippies, take a minute to reflect on just how many musicians whose work was championed by pioneer Larry Levan are still here filling floors. *Peter Nicholson* 

#### **BLAZE'S KEVIN HEDGE ON THE UNIVERSE**

"I think that we have an obligation to contribute to the world. What I've always wanted to do with Josh is to be of value to the universe. All of this music over the years that we have been blessed to be part of is music and ideas and concepts and messages that are trying to get out to the universe. We just happen to be the terminals through which they pass. We are the instruments of the universe—of the cosmos—and the cosmos is using us to bring this message to the world. [I'm] practicing a universal lifestyle—understanding that my importance in the universe is to be a grain of sand on the beach, but [also] to be contributing to the overall beach. What I'm trying to evolve to [is] someone who contributes to the world."

v.westendrecords.com



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ALSO IN 2004



image





VISIONARIES 3rd album "PANGAEA" available on Up Above Records FEB 24.04



PREFIX Words DJ Anna Image Joshua Brown



"Talkin' 'bout, 'No one goes to shows no more/

they're too crowded'/So they stay home and

burn shit/ Then they say, 'I downloaded your life

Hope is out now on Lex Records, and look for the Fuck Clear Channel

Tour with Non-Prophets, MacLethal and Grand Buffet coming to a city

near you. www.non-prophets.com, www.lexrecords.com

No way around it, opening a gallery in New York is risky. Especially if—as in the case of **Gigantic Artspace**—it's located on a fringe street below

Canal, far from the art-world nexus of Chelsea.

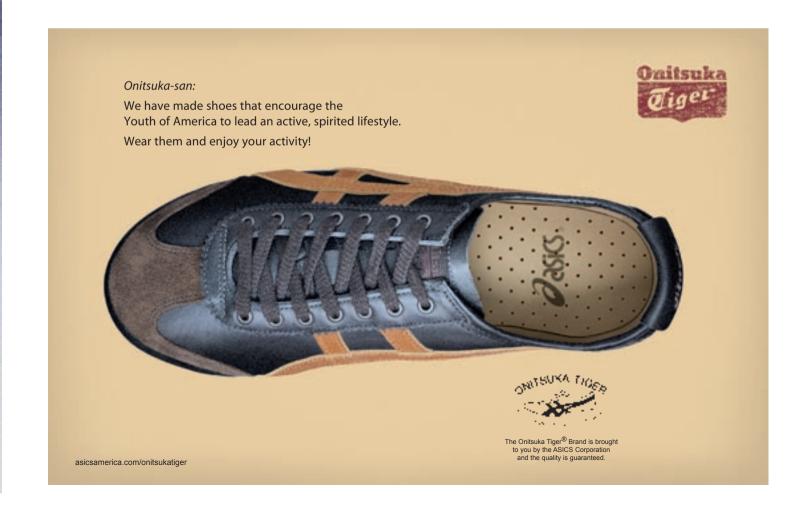
Bring on a political agenda and a curatorial program not solely focused on visual arts and you might just hear someone whisper "radical" over their martini.

**PREFIX** 

GAS's founders breathed a sigh of relief when hipsters queued outside in the December chill to witness their inaugural exhibition, D Troit. Curated by Trevor Schoonmaker, D Troit gave a brief tour of Motown guided by nine artists. Like no other American city, Detroit derives cultural fecundity from tragic urban decay, a paradox captured in Doug Coombe's luminous photographs of the abandoned Detroit Train Station's crumbling interiors. But fitting with Detroit's recent resurgence, the show's best pieces had little to do with destruction. Andrew Dosunmu's documentary Hot Irons untwisted the updos and weaves of Detroit's black hairstylists. Equally inspiring was Mike Rubin's "313 Jukebox," a 20-hour iPod compendium of Detroit-born music. from The Supremes to Underground Resistance.

Future exhibitions at GAS will similarly cross disciplines, resting on the belief that exploring the intersection of music, pop culture and art will provoke social dialogue. Let's hope the art world intelligentsia thinks so too. Michael Haggerty www.giganticartspace.com





ground to a halt. Francis, a talented slam poet and world class freestyle MC (not to mention

an avid interpretive dancer) went on to win

**PREFIX** Words Tomas Palermo Image Riley Swift



#### MATS KARLSSON'S RAW FUSION **EMPIRE SPICES UP THE SCANDINAVIAN MUSIC SCENE.**

It's June and Mats Karlsson is in San Francisco zipping up the faux Members Only jacket he just bought to battle the frigid weather. How a Swedish DJ and label owner could be cold in California given Scandinavia's notoriously chilly winters is a mystery-or maybe not. The oft-repeated quote "the coldest winter I ever spent was a summer in San Francisco" rings true on this foggy, overcast day.

Karlsson-also known as DJ Mad Mats-is in town on a much-needed vacation following a flurry of activity at his Stockholm-based Raw Fusion label, whose singles have DJs like Richard Dorfmiester and Gilles Peterson in fits of rapture.

The euphoria is understandable. The output on Raw Fusion, along with its sister imprints GAAM and Juggling, ranges from Fela-tuff Afrofunk and sample-heavy Latin hiphop singles to uptempo club numbers featuring central Europe's most gifted jazz players. Karlsson's Raw Fusion empire also includes a club night in Stockholm and a record shop. Add in his DJ schedule and you'll know why, true to his DJ name, he's a bit barmy.

"I'm just about to get a partner," explains Karlsson of how he plans to relieve some of the pressure from his schedule. "He's an old friend from a group I was in called Boogaloo, back in the acid jazz days. He's got a bit of money to invest, so we can afford to put out album projects on Raw Fusion and Juggling, the two main labels."

Founded in April 2002, Raw Fusion already has a crazy diverse roster, including Danish jazz duo Povo, an Afrobeathead group called Damn, future funkateer Stockholm Cyclo and the "Gonky" house sounds of Gothenburg's Erik and Arvid.

"I come from hip-hop originally," offers Karlsson. "I was a DJ and breakdancer in the late '80s. Then I got in to digging for breaks, and from breaks into all kinds of music, new and old. When people ask 'What kind of stuff do you release on the label or play in the club?; I usually say all kinds of black dance music. It could be jazz, funk, house, funky electronicwhatever." Currently, there's no lack of talent in

Sweden: "I could put out a 12" every month if I wanted to," he says. "Stockholm is booming with producers right now."

Sweden's Koop garnered international acclaim last year ("The Koop guys were regulars at the Raw Fusion club"), but Karlsson is quick to define his connection to the Scandinavian scene typified by groups like Nuspirit Helsinki, Jol and Swell Session, "I don't mind being known as a Swedish label, [but] I don't want to be tagged with the 'Nordic Lounge' thing," Karlsson specifies. "In Stockholm, hip-hop is huge [and] soul is big, but no one hears about it. Stockholm [has become known for] stiff, cold, laid-back lounge electronic music. I don't want to be a part of it because I think it's a sinking ship."

Karlsson loves his work but, like a true DJ, he mainly digs the music side of it: "I'm too stressed to think about the business side [of running the labels]. I want to have fun. If it gets to be too much work I'll just do something

Look for new singles on Juggling and Raw Fusion from Lynn and Mellow, and new albums from Povo, Damn and Bossa Electrica





**PREFIX** 

#### **BATTLE GROUNDS**

"No walls can separate humanitarian or human rights crises in one part of the world from national security crises in another," explained UN Secretary-General Kofi Annan in 2001, but that was probably before he met George W. Bush and his oil barons. In 2/15: The Day the World Said No To War (hardcover; AK

Press, \$24.95), Annan's quote is juxtaposed (along with words from Noam Chomsky, the late Anna Lindh, Michael Moore and Arundhati Roy) with vibrant photography depicting the mas-

sive global anti-war protests on February 15, 2003. The resulting book is a sobering but lively look at dissent's diversity, rendered in color that'll make your eyes and heart bleed.

If you haven't run out of blood by the time you finish 2/15, Twilight of Empire (softcover; Perceval Press, \$14.95) will most likely turn you whiter than Bush's PACs. Viggo Mortensen might be swinging swords in the Lord of the Rings trilogy, but in real life he and an all-star cast of contributors-includina Mike Davis, Ambassador Joseph Wilson, Naomi Klein, Jodie Evans, Kristina Borjesson and more-are taking dead aim at the hostile economic takeover of Baghdad. The book (which, I admit, I had a small part in editing) is a much-needed vivisection of the overt corporate interests that wish to plunder and privatize a land that houses an oil bonanza. Wake up and smell the petroleum. Scott Thill www.percevalpress.com, www.akpress.org



**PREFIX** Words Simon Hawkins Image Cleveland Aaron

#### CROYDON'S CHRIS REED, THE OTHER PLASTIC LOVER, SERVES UP RUBBERY GARAGE GOODNESS.

Not to be confused with Richie Hawtin's techno alter ego, South London garage producer Plasticman is certainly living up to his end of the shared moniker, proving nearly as malleable as the cartoon original. The flexible beat purveyor is quickly becoming one of the names to watch in the leftfield two-step underground, which has split UK garage into a number of dubiously defined subgenres, including dubstep, 8-bar and grime.

"I have no musical background," says 21year old Plasticman, known to friends and family as Chris Reed. "I dropped out of music at school and just started producing to help my DJing initially. I noticed certain acts getting better bookings just because they'd had a record out and their name was known. So I started making my own. It grew from there."

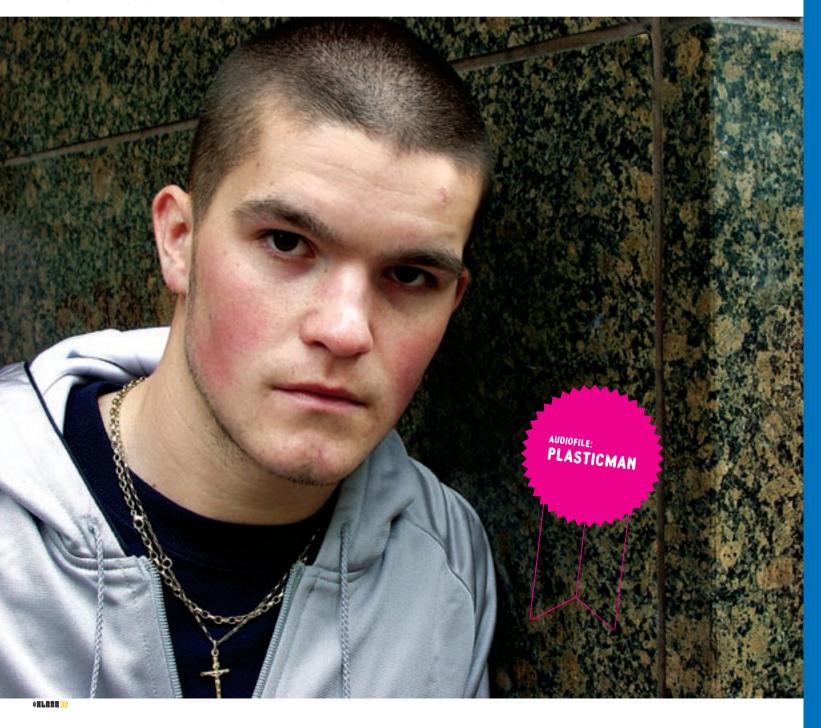
As a DJ, Croydon-based Reed was always into the truer beats of Wookie or Zed Bias rather than chart cheese. By the time he got into production, the controversy-fuelled UK garage backlash, fuelled by a string of shootings in clubs, proved an unlikely blessing, forcing him down more experimental avenues. After getting rave reviews for the fierce beats of his 2002 debut "Shockwave," followed guickly by the more experimental "Lift" EP, Reed found himself feted by a whole different crowd-Two Lone Swordsmen's Andrew Weatherall began playing his tunes and Aphex Twin's Rephlex label recently came calling

"They'd obviously heard my stuff somewhere, and arranged this link-up with me and two other Soulja acts, [Mark One and Slaughter Mob]," says Reed of his unexpected

Rephlex deal. "It was a surprise. But we put together a show reel and now we've got individual EPs and a joint LP lined up. I do think garage can be taken more seriously now, being underground again and with people like Si Begg mixing it in with their usual stuff. It's great, as this gives us access to a whole different market. The garage scene doesn't sell too much these days."

Such is the UK's still-lingering garage/violence stigma that Reed's own club night, Filthy Dub, was forcibly closed before Christmas for spurious security reasons. For now, Plasticman is hunkering down in his bedroom studio, putting a solid body of genre-bending tracks together. Maybe one day we'll see two plastic men ruling techno. Until then, Mr. Hawtin, have your lawyers ready.}

www.tempa.com, www.dubplate.net





CHASE PHOENIX

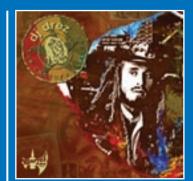
Cut To the Chase
This superior debut shows that the old-school rap
style still sounds fresh in the sea of overblown vanity
productions, Guests include: Aesop Rock, Jemini, and
C-Rayz Walz.



Household names within the hip-hop game have lined up to collaborate with Chops on this masterpiece entitled Virtuosity, Guests include: Raekwon, Talib Kweli. Phil da Agony, and more.



Playtight
The Bay Area trio are back with their long-awaited second album. Playtight. Back-to-basics. no-nonsense interpretations of old-skool values and aesthetics,



#### DJ DREZ Capture of Sound

DJ Drez explores boundaries by combining yesterday's reggae roots & soul with the ingenuity of today's hip-hop artists. A timeless album featuring Aceyalone. hip-hop artists. A timeless album featurin Eligh & Grouch. Abstract Rude. and others.

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JOSH WINK 20 to 20 Wink drops the Acid back in House with 7 brand-new tracks.



KID 606
Kill Sound Before Sound Kills You
A loving assault that is as much an ironic jab at the
contemporary face of electronic music as it is a
resurrection of the history behind today's scene.



MANKIND LIBERATION FRONT

Automind

Unconventional Genre blurring, Light years ahead of their time. Welcome to the future of indie pop.



ORGANIC THOUGHTS Purest Form
"This crew could be the new Fugees comin' out of New Jersey!" - undergroundhiphop.com

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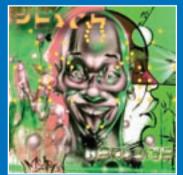












**PEACE** 

Megabite
The youngest and boldest of the Freestyle Fellowship delivers his complex lyrical style infused with danceable style-filled grooves. Featuring Fat Jack. Abstract Rude KI.T.S. and others.



WAVETEC ONE Various Artists
WaveTec One captures the harder, more techy sounds
of Wave's catalog, music that uses electronics to evoke a unique set of moods and movement.



Nude consumes with a haunting collection of lyrics juxtaposed by the lull of deep and melodic grooves that are distinctively Vast.



Yak Ballz emerges out of the Weathermen camp with his debut full length featuring Cage & Camu among

}PREFIX }PREFIX Words David Hemingway Image Peter Ivantsov



#### FREE RADICALS

The phrase "a picture is worth a thousand words" has particular relevance in the world of street art. Tags and bombs compel the general public to respond to elaborate letter forms and self-made fonts, but stencils, wheat paste posters and simple graphics encapsulate messages that are easily digestible with a single glance. The Art of Rebellion: World of Street Art (hardcover; Gingko Press, \$29.95) devotes itself to the massive culture currently reconfiguring city streets with flak-helmeted canines, sharptoothed pirahnas, arrows, massive juice cartons and (who could forget) those tiny, tiled space invaders. Editor C100 distills these worldwide shenanigans into an essential 144-page book that leaves no paintcan, sticker or bucket unturned as it covers artists from as far afield as Tokyo, Sydney, Einhoven, Reunion Island and Rozumberok, Slovenia. To further sweeten the deal, the book also comes with a CD from Compost Records and collectible stickers, allowing you to start your own revolution from the comfort of your corporate cubicle. Tyra Bangs www.gingkopress.com

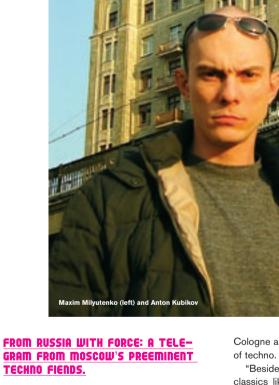




As a response to the growing irrelevance of the actual symposia at the Winter Music Conference, David Prince-creator of the famous WMC "Miami Master List" of party information-has created M3, which stands under the banner "Miami, Music, Multimedia." M3, which will take place March 5-9, is designed to provide links between the music world and reps from technology companies, videogame manufacturers, fashion labels and the film industry. In the daytime, speeches and seminars will be held in a 10,000 square foot air-conditioned

tent on the beach. Come 5pm, the pool at the Surfcomber Hotel will be turned into M3's Sunset Sessions, featuring DJs, live acts, and more schmoozing than you ever dreamed possible. Now the only problem is finding time to actually work on that tan! Tyra Bangs





AUDIOFILE: SCS1-9

FROM RUSSIA WITH FORCE: A TELE-GRAM FROM MOSCOW'S PREEMINENT

"After Saturday clubbing, we used to hold after-parties at our studio," explains SCSI-9 of the growls and croaks that seep through the graceful tech-house of "My Sunday Zoo." "Because it was, like, 10 or 11 in the evening, there wouldn't be much reality in our minds at that point. All those folks looked quite like funny animals from the zoo."

SCSI-9 is the alias of Moscow-based duo Anton Kubikov and Maxim Milyutenko. The former was once a DJ at Russia's only radio station devoted entirely to modern electronic music, while Milyutenko-a one-time metal and oil trader-was apparently seduced by music-making after a business trip to

Cologne alerted him to the untrammeled joys

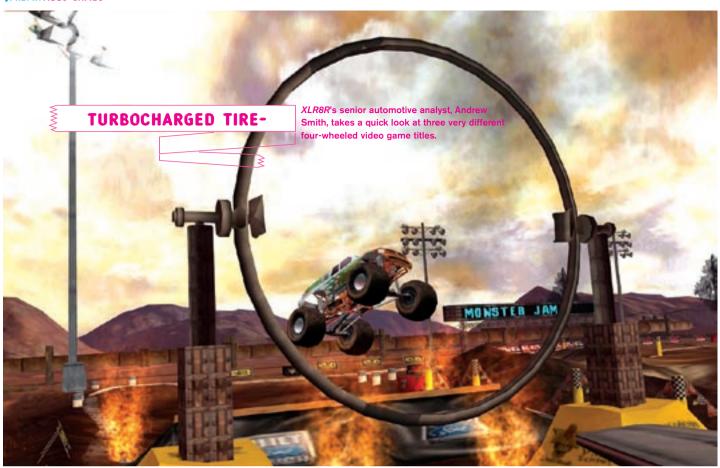
"Besides being influenced by electronic classics like Kraftwerk or Tangerine Dream, we both love the new house stuff from Cologne," they admit. "The contemporary German electronic scene is roaring. It is way ahead of, say, London. It's very vital-just check out the music distributed by Kompakt."

Having previously issued twelves via Trapez, Salo and Freizitglauben, SCSI-9 released their debut long-player on Force Tracks in June 2003, bestowing it with the neologistic title Digital Russian. Nevertheless, they're reluctant to ascribe a distinct music-making aesthetic to artists from the former USSR.

"The main 'Russian' thing in contemporary electronica is probably that it's a bit differentmore dark or abstract, if you want. It's very lo-fi, and you will hardly find proper techno or house stuff, besides us. SCSI-9 mostly has concrete, distinctive melody lines. We are a bit more naive and lyrical. I'd hardly see a link between EU or Fizzarum and us. There is a great trance scene in Russia, though."

SCSI-9 has previously suggested that club culture in their home country is akin to "that of Beirut," but their stance appears to have mellowed. "Although some things are still forbidden or quite dangerous, Moscow really has become a main nightlife point in Europe on par with Berlin or London," they admit. "Moscow is Europe's number one [spot] by the [number] of places that are open 24 hours. Add the beauty of Russian women...they are the best, by far."}

Digital Russian is out now on Force Tracks. www.force-tracks.net





#### OPTHIN PO

PS2/Midway/\$49.99) After nearly two decades, the sequel to this arcade classic makes its way into your

living room. The flat

downward-looking perspective of the original has been replaced by super-fancy 3D graphics and nutty, winding courses through city streets and snowy landscapes. What hasn't changed is that you're still blasting away with your Bond-esque spy machine, raking the enemy with machine gun fire, rockets and oil slicks. Although the graphics are awesome and control of the vehicle effortless, the level of difficulty is pretty steep, making this sequel more than a little frustrating.

MANHUNT (PS2. Xbox/Rockstar: \$49.99)

and irrelevant the next. Tae K. Kim

RATING KEY:

Say what you will about Rockstar Games: there's no

denying that they have balls. Rather than cave in to the

firestorm of controversy and criticism surrounding their

Grand Theft Auto franchise, Rockstar chose to put on

their asbestos underwear and forge ahead with their lat-

est mass-murder simulator, Manhunt. The game, which

finds himself the unwilling star of a serial-murder snuff film,

is so gratuitously violent and over-the-top that even a hardened gamer like

myself wanted to wag my finger in the general direction of the developers. Manhunt

does have its merits: the atmosphere is genuinely creepy and there are some guiltily

satisfying moments of the jaw-dropping "Holy shit!" variety. However, the gameplay

that shoving a piece of glass into a thug's neck would become boring, but after the

= Ultra-Violence

hundredth or so time, it does. In the end, Manhunt will be to gamers what Marilyn

devolves over time into a repetitive and brainless experience. You wouldn't think

places you in the shoes of a condemned convict who



#### MANSTED UXU: **MASTERS OF METAL**

(PS2, GameCube) UbiSoft/\$29.99)

Hell yeah! I challenge anyone to find a more bizarre slice of Americana than the monster truck. It started with Big Foot, and now

we've evolved to embrace the likes of Grave Digger, Eradicator and the flag-waving favorite, American Guardian. The challenge in this video game version is to travel to competitions in all 50 states; you collect money to buy upgrades so you can storm through the stages with plenty of bounce and roaring, nitro-fueled speed. The gameplay is addictive and truly, ironically



#### **NUIDINED** (PS2) aleco/\$39.99)

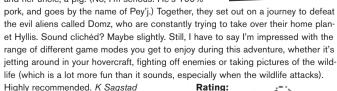
Combine trashy-looking ladies, mundane gameplay and cheap and nasty Japanese programming with

Lowrider magazine and you're in for about five minutes of fun. There are three types of competition: the frontwheel "bounce" the four-wheel combo "dance" and for pickups, the "bed dance." In the "bounce" mode you literally time your hydraulic thrusts by pressing one button until your car jumps higher and higher. Starting off with a beater that you customize, perhaps the most enjoyable part of the game is the old-school Macpaint-type drawing tool for making your own designs. Disappointing.



BEYOND GOOD AND EVIL (PS2, Xbox/UbiSoft/\$19.99)

Beyond Good and Evil is a visually amazing game that explores all the best aspects of the action/adventure genre in the year 2004. Combining the sophistication and stealth of titles such as Metal Gear Solid with massive, yet detailed environments (à la Ratchet & Clank), BGE will appeal to a wide range of players. The story evolves around a sassy lady named Jade and her uncle, a pig. (No, I'm serious. He's 100%





Manson was to the American public: shocking and scintillating one minute, cartoonish

- = Girl Friendly









darris and Dylan Klebold at Columbine High School Cafeteria (Littleton, Colorado, 1999) by Jon Haddock











#### THEY'VE GOT GAME

You never realize how much you take videogames and videogame culture for granted until you get in a room full of people your parents age ogling realistic Playstation graphics and itching to get their fingers on the latest shoot-'em-up. At least, that was the scene at the opening night of

Bang the Machine: Computer Gaming Art and Artifacts at San Francisco's Yerba Buena Center for the Arts. This was no retro show: Pacman didn't make an appearance, and Donkey Kong was nowhere to be found. Only two items in the exhibition nodded towards the pixelated phantoms of our youth: Janek Simon's "Carpet Invaders," an adaptation of Space Invaders that used patterns from a war-related Afghani rug design; and Fur's "Painstation," a version of Pong where players receive an electric shock every time they miss a ball.

The most prominent and disturbing part of Bang the Machine were works that showed the extremely narrow gap between virtual violence and real-life warfare. C-level's "Waco Resurrection" allows users to don a David Koresh mask and defend the Waco compound, and Jon Haddock's Screenshots placed videogame renderings of traumatic events such as the Martin Luther King assassination and the Columbine shooting against computerized screenshots of fictional incidents. America's Army, developed by the U.S. Army to lure new recruits, realistically recreated maneuvers from basic training to staking out Afghani territory, blurring the line between real-life action and virtual amusement.

Bang the Machine wasn't all dark moments, though; a Dance, Dance Revolution showcase, cutting-edge Sims mods, and a "Playshop" ideas studio curated by Futurefarmers' Amy Franceschini show the ability of videogames applications to change our future for the better. Tyra Bangs

Bang the Machine runs through April 4 at Yerba Buena Center for the Arts in San Francisco, CA. See www.yerbabuenaarts.com for more information.

### QUICKIE



Considering all the mods and hacks out there for the PS2, here's a legal upgrade that most game nerds are not going to be able to resist: a 40GB hard drive that slips into the back of your existing console. Already reasonably priced at \$99, the drive comes with Square Enix's very popular multi-player online roleplaying game, Final Fantasy XI, the drive also features a media player for storing your mp3s and faster loading times for existing games. Look for new titles to support the drive with download able content such as Sony's SOCOM II: U.S. Navy SEALs and Syphon Filter: The Omega Strain. Andrew Smith



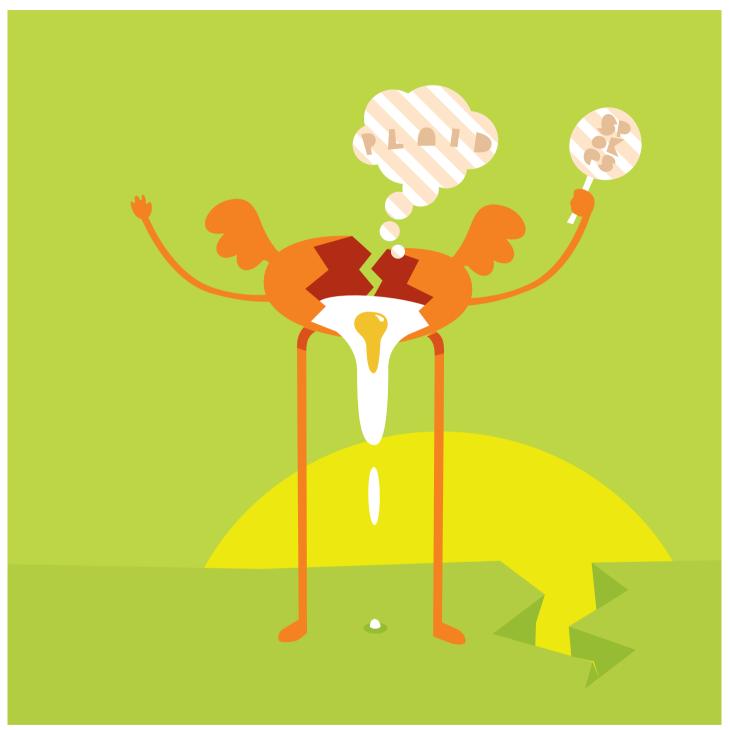




**SKLRAR 36** 



In an attempt to capture the continual exchange between musicians and graphic technicians, we've invited five emerging visual artists from around the globe to envision their own jackets for a new batch of cutting-edge electronic discs. From the Latin-centric work of Venezuela's organic MASA design collective to the hardcore futurist fuzz of Osaka's Skull Dezain, the results they've delivered are as explosive as the music they were inspired by. Tomas Palermo



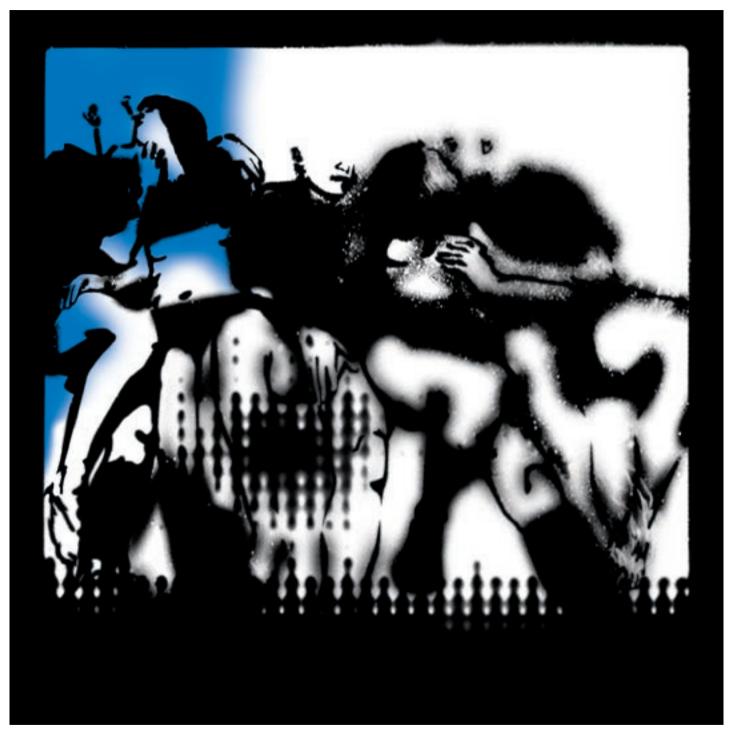
PLAID SPOKES (Warp]

ADAM CRUICKSHANK (Regular Product) Sydney, Australia www.regularproduct.com





TONHO (Quinta-feira) Rio De Janeiro, Brazil www.quinta-feira.org



**SQUAREPUSHER ULTRAVISITOR** (Warp)

THE SKULL DEZAIN
Osaka, Japan www.skull-dez.com

\$KLRRR 40



GIFT OF GAB FOURTH DIMENSIONAL ROCKET SHIPS GOING UP (Quannum)

MASA Caracas, Venezuela www.masa.com.ve



MÚM *SUMMER MAKE GOOD* (Fat Cat)

YOGI PROCTOR (Popwar, Popular Group)
Oceanside, CA www.thepopulargroup.com www.popwar.com



# IIIKE THIS...

THE THINKING PERSON'S DANCE DIVA, DANI SICILIANO MAKES A SHARP LEFT TURN ON HER DEBUT SOLO ALBUM.

#### WORDS MARTIN TURENNE IMAGES KAREEM BLACK MAKEUP BLAIR PATTERSON

In a room packed with posers, Dani Siciliano dances in the DJ booth all by her lone-some. With her head tossed back and eyes closed, the singer/producer/DJ is oblivious to her surroundings, shaking it to Lumidee's sub-karaoke croon on "Never Leave You (Uh Oooh, Uh Oooh)." For the first time all night, the drinkers on hand at Manhattan's APT nightclub liven up a bit, their ears perked by one of last summer's catchiest tunes. Coming at the conclusion of a pop-shunning set of '70s-era reggae and funk, the radio hit doesn't exactly light up the floor—but it *does* prompt the would-be b-boy standing next to me to ask, "Yo, who's on the decks, bro?"

Well, bro, that's Dani, and with the recent release of her fantastic first album, *Likes...*, on !K7, the London-based chanteuse is staking an early claim for 2004's best debut. Best known as the vocal engine driving husband Matthew Herbert's quirky house anthems, Siciliano veers further afield on her solo album, fusing brooding jazz melodies and crackling electronic textures to beguiling ends. Marked by her ornately disheveled arrangements and breathy phrasing, the Arizona native's debut is a sensualist's delight that revels in the enchanted interplay of sin and confession, remorse and reconciliation, seduction and surrender.

XLR8R: You played a nice set at APT, but you weren't mixing records. Why not?

Dani Siciliano: Hearing a really good DJ can be fantastically fun, and it's great when people know how to work it, but I'm somewhere else right now. I like DJ culture—it's

something that shaped me, but it's not my whole reason for doing music. I actually thought about bringing a microphone with me and talking between songs, and harking back to something else.

#### XLR8R: Like getting your toast on?

**DS:** That's the one. But it wouldn't have been with a sense of irony-that's something that really bothers me.

XLR8R: There was a photo of you in Time Out's listing for the show last night, and the caption said something like, "Hear a set by Matthew Herbert's main

**DS:** Are you serious? How demoralizing! That fucking sucks. I'm sorry but I didn't know that. I'm going to have to have a word with someone.

#### XLR8R: Isn't that a perception that you're going to have to deal with?

**DS:** Absolutely, but there's got to be a cut-off point to it. It's not my defining moment. If I was a man, I don't think they would care who my partner is. It's logical to define me through the work that I've done with Matthew, but the rest of it's like bad tabloid stuff. Is that the best they can do as reporters? I've probably done over 300 shows in my life, but that's not as important as who my partner is?

#### XLR8R: Where did you grow up?

**DS:** I lived in Sierra Vista, Arizona, and then I moved to Washington D.C. when I was ten years old. I was there until I was 17, then I went off to university in Richmond, Virginia.

#### XLR8R: What did you study in college?

**DS:** [Laughs] I don't know! I left after my third year and moved out to San Francisco. The biggest thing about college was that I had some friends who were in the music department. It was quite an interesting time. My friends talked me into taking a vocal class and I gigged quite a lot with trios and quartets.

#### XLR8R: Why did you move to San Francisco?

**DS:** Part of it was not knowing what I wanted to do at university, and partly it was a friend who asked me to come out. When I got there I tried to keep singing in jazz bands, but that really didn't work out. But, by the time I got to San Francisco, they had this very young free party [scene] going on. I started going out a lot and got turned on to DJing by a friend of mine. I guess I've got good friends, huh?

#### XLR8R: Yeah, sounds like it. Why did you get Beans and Mara [Carlyle] to do covers of "Walk The Line" instead of remixing the track?

**DS:** It was the same reason why I did the Nirvana cover ["Come As You Are"]—I just thought it would be more fun to free people up a bit. The only restriction I gave was that they weren't allowed to use my voice in their version. I didn't care if they used sounds from their dog or their mother, just as long as it wasn't my voice.

#### XLR8R: In doing that, it's almost as if you're treating the song as you would a iazz standard.

DS: Exactly.

#### XLR8R: Why did you cover the Nirvana song?

**DS:** It's like what you said: when you a cover a song, you're treating it like a standard. When I first heard that track, I was listening to a lot of dance music, and I wasn't watching television or listening to the radio. So I had kind of closed myself off from the rest of the music world. But somehow that one song really cut through. It just *sounds* like a jazz tune. It has that sensibility. The lyrics are really dark, and I liked that.

#### XLR8R: How did you get into recording your own music?

**DS:** It started off as a curiosity, just knocking around in a studio environment. I've always been around people who were making music and working in studios. I even interned at a recording studio in Richmond. When I started doing my own thing, it wasn't as if I had the pressure of immediately having to make brilliant music. It was just very casual.

#### XLR8R: How long did it take you to compose a piece that you were happy with?

**DS:** It took quite a while, over a year and a half. Once I'd finished "One String" [which appears on *Likes...*] it was that crowning moment where I was like, "I think I can do this and put it out there and let other people hear it."

#### XLR8R: That's such a big hurdle to get over as an artist, because you have to realize your first experiments are probably going to suck.

**DS:** Definitely. I remember the first time I accidentally erased a whole piece of my own music. I wasn't exactly overjoyed about doing it, but it helped me realize that this is part of the artistic process. You have to learn to let go.

#### XLR8R: The first song on the album ["Same"] has a very odd structure, almost as if it was improvised. How did you put it together?

**DS:** I don't adhere to any hard and fast rules for writing. With that track, there was a tonal pulse that I built from. Somehow I made this sound, and I can't remember how, but it was this pulsing, beautiful thing. So I just set up a loop, and within five minutes the melody and words came. The majority of the sounds in that piece are my voice being run through a lot of effects.

#### XLR8R: Would you agree that [Herbert's] Bodily Functions was your true coming-out party as a singer?

**DS:** Yeah, probably. Matthew is a really interesting character to work with. He has such clear ideas about what he wants. He's very precise about how vocals should sound. In some ways *Bodily Functions* was a bit looser than anything else we'd done together. I think I learned how to work within his boundaries more, and maybe stretch them a bit.

#### XLR8R: What role did he play on your album?

**DS:** Matt was an obvious person to ask to work with me on the project, and I'm happy we did. We were both aware of it being misconstrued that he was in charge of it, and sometimes we were a little bit hyper-conscious of that perception being out there. So it was a difficult decision trying to figure out how to involve him. He kind of came in at the very end of the deal, after I'd written most of the tracks. He would add a little bit of magic to them in his own unique way.

# XLR8R: There are moments on the album that remind me of him, especially in your use of found sounds. Were you influenced by Matthew's manifesto, the PCCOM [Personal Contract for the Composition Of Music]?

**DS:** At one point he asked me, "Are you going to follow PCCOM?" and I was like, "No, I can't." I'd probably already broken a bunch of rules by then. I never clear my board, for example. At the end of the day that's his manifesto, not mine. Still, once you've opened up to the world of found sounds, the possibilities are literally unlimited.

#### XLR8R: To what extent can we read the songs on the record as political?

**DS:** None. They weren't written with that in mind. They were about intimate situations. I mean, if sociology is a study of the politics of emotion between people, then I suppose you could say it's political. But I'm not about to tell listeners what they should think about the political situation. Music serves an intimate function for me.

### XLR8R: I really like what you do with your vocals on this record. Can you talk about restraining yourself vocally, and playing it not conservatively, but coyly?

**DS:** Most of the vocals on the album are really dry and don't really have effects on them. I'm not the world's best singer, but that doesn't mean I don't have unique things to offer as a vocalist. I like it when the vocals sound quite closed and close.

## XLR8R: We've been led by pop divas to believe that emotion is about how ferociously a singer projects, but that ignores all the other ways to express yourself

**DS:** Yeah, absolutely. In pop music, singing is pretty much all that the singer does. Luckily, I can build the musical context for my own voice. For me, it's important that the production sounds just as good as the vocals. And that lets me be quite a bit more expressive, which ultimately is what any artist should be doing.

Dani Siciliano Likes... is out now on !K7. www.k7.com











Ever since Tortoise dropped their landmark 1996 song "DJed"-intriguing critics, IDM artists and hip-hop DJs alike-people have both hailed them for shattering indie's rock orthodoxy and dismissed them as a confused band that can't figure itself out. More debating about "post-rock" will break out over Tortoise's latest album, *It's All Around You*, but I was more curious about what personal experiences shaped its sound. More importantly, I wanted to discuss how echoes of the band's Chicago hometown could be heard throughout the record. These questions were sometimes difficult for the band to answer, as they often view their music by nut and bolt, but we eventually traced the evolution of Tortoise to Chi-town's proclivity for no-nonsense art.

XLR8R: The new album seems to move from bright sunshine to darkness to grev melancholv.

**Jeff Parker:** Right [*laughs*]...I think it's kind of a sign of the times politically. There's the war, the Bush coup, the botched election, the huge shift to the right worldwide, the whole 9-11 [tragedy] and the weird pseudo-fascism that's going on. We're living in a really trying time, and I think that everyone in the band agrees.

**John McEntire:** Inevitably, when we start to sequence all of the songs together, we have to think about it that way a little bit, just so there's a flow and continuity that makes sense. In terms of writing, I don't think we work on any narrative principles. But certain tracks will have certain connotations that make more sense if they work together as a whole.

XLR8R: The first part of "Crest" reminds me of those scenes in old romance movies where two lovers run into each other's arms on the beach. But there's also the guitar rumble that closes the song and suggests something ominous. Johnny Herndon: That part is the couple running through a scarred, nuclear wasteland into each other's four arms and two heads. I love it! I played this record for my mother-in-law and my wife's aunt during Thanksgiving. I said, "Hey, wanna listen to the new Tortoise record?" I didn't realize what a horror-movie soundtrack it sounds like. They were like, "Oh, this is interesting!"

**Doug McCombs:** [That] has to do with the frame of mind you're listening to the record with. Certain chords and dissonances might be associated with melancholic or scary music, because that's the context that people heard them in before. But I don't necessarily agree that they're inherently scary or melancholy on their own.

#### XLR8R: What was often in your mind when recording the new album?

JH: There was nothing specific like, "Oh, I'm bringing pain and sorrow to this record," because when you're making music, you're just one part of the whole. But my wife is having a baby, so that was on my mind a lot. Some of the stuff that I wrote was very influenced from having toured with Nobukazu Takemura and Aki Takahashi on the Tortoise tour, and [from] playing drums with them.

JP: I tried to put a little more heart in my performances. Tortoise is accused of making this cold music that's not outwardly emotional. I wanted to really put it out there and contribute a more emotional performance than just playing a part correctly. I wanted to express some strong feelings about life, [especially] a new life. On the other hand, there's all the political corruption. You also could've just eaten a great meal and gotten high on that [laughs].

#### XLR8R: How does the new album differ from Standards?

JP: Standards was recorded really fast for Tortoise, [because] we learned the material outside the studio ahead of time and then put the tracks and overdubs down. For the new record, we came up with the whole thing in the studio-in that way it's closer to [the 1998 album] TNT. The most striking difference is that it seems like we finally broke down our own musical barriers. When I listen to our past records, there's a lot of generic diver-



sity—there'd be a jazzy tune, a rock tune, an electro tune and then weird ambient things. This record has a real continuity in all the compositions, but none of them seem to be in a grab bag, as our older stuff was. It's something that we've been working toward, and we're starting to get it. It's really exciting for me.

#### XLR8R: Any musical influences that affected Tortoise since Standards?

**JH:** There are some new musical notes that scientists have found, and we used those a lot on our new record. They were discovered in a black hole in space, so we got out our telescopes and our hearing radars to use those notes. They're secret notes that not everybody's using. But I heard the new Christina Aguilera record, and she's using a couple of those notes, too. [*Pauses*] I'm fucking around. We just use the same old elements in a different order to make them new again.

# XLR8R: Your ability to blend different genres together is striking for a band from Chicago, which has a reputation for being ethnically divided. Does Tortoise defy that reputation?

JP: That's definitely what I hate about living in Chicago. I think about [the racism] all the time. But if you go outside that, it's probably one of the most culturally rich places in the country. People here are really, for better or worse, proud of their roots and where they come from. Because of the strong ethnic communities and social structures that exist here, there's a lot of powerful art and music to take advantage of. We try to stay open and check stuff out, and let it seep its way into what we're trying to create.

#### XLR8R: How did Chicago's mid-'90s gentrification boom affect Tortoise?

Dan Bitney: Our first record has this sparse, empty sound that kind of described what the city used to be before the mid-'90s. Most of the guys had this big loft in an empty industrial corridor that runs through the city. There was an overlying, empty feeling in the city that suddenly changed with the housing boom, and our music also changed in a weird way. A perfect example would be my first apartment, on a block with eight vacant lots—at some point in '96, every one of those lots became condos that sold instantly. John [McEntire]'s studio is near the Wicker Park district, and every Friday and Saturday night I'd go there and say, "Who are these people?"

JP: I really [miss] that time, because it was special when all of Chicago's artistic activity centered around Wicker Park. Johnny [Herndon] and Doug moved there when there were a lot of musicians there and you could really afford to live there. It seemed like I'd meet someone there everyday who just moved into town and tried to make things happen. It was really inspiring seeing all of those bands, and meeting people who I thought were cool and saying, "Hey, let's get together and play sometime." And now it never happens. There's just a lot of yuppies there. It's really depressing. It's too expensive to live there, and there's nothing cool happening.

**DM:** Chicago is such a big city that you can never completely fuck it up...[Tortoise] is influenced and inspired by every single day living here. There's a real love/hate thing between art and culture and everyday life. Chicago is still a very working-class place. Your typical Chicagoan is skeptical of something that's too cultural or arty, so the things that do survive here don't really have an artifice. It's all pretty real.

#### XLR8R: Will instrumental rock bands like yours garner mainstream attention in the near future?

**DB:** I can't see us entering the mainstream, because there's a certain part of the [corporate record] industry that's really afraid of stuff like us. A prime example would be the *Conan O'Brien Show* and how we almost got on it. They just panicked and said, "There's no singer!" But I'd watch the show and see an instrumental surf-rock band with these wonderful women dancing. So I think that anything gimmicky would have a better chance than what we're doing, even though it really doesn't make sense to me. I don't expect that this record will blow us up.

#### XLR8R: In Tortoise, I hear a balance between the futuristic new and oldfashioned Americana. Is that a fair assessment?

**DM:** I would hope so. Basically, we try to fuse these different things that we love, which include older styles of music, and somehow make them work with something more progressive or futuristic. But it's hard, because there are always people out there who want to exploit it and make lots of money off of it.

**JH:** It's a weird world we live in. What can I say, man.... We make weird music in it. I guess it's always clashing, destroying itself and then building something new. That's the process of creation.

It's All Around You is out now on Thrill Jockey. www.thrilljockey.com

# SOME CHICAGO SPOTS THAT INFLUENCE TORTOISE IMAGES SAM PREKOP



Dan Bitney: Division Street as depicted in Nelson Algren's *The Man With The Golden Arm.* It's a great and sad story, and I love how all the characters talk. [They say] shit like weed-hounds, heartbroke bummies and alky-cookers (people making booze in their bathtubs.) Everyone's names are what they are: dealer, husband,

#### Jeff Parker: The Polish and porkchop stands

that used to be on Maxwell Street or Jazz Record Mart. JRM is the world's largest jazz and blues record store, people come from all over the world to go there...Most of my record collection probably comes from there.

**John McEntire:** The Rainbo Club. Perennial neighborhood bar.

**John Herndon:** Humboldt Park. A small piece of green in the middle of a grey day, or my dogs' beds, where sleeping beauties lie.



Doug McCombs: The Garfield Park Conservatory. If any sculptures by famed glass blower Chihuly are present, smash them. Now enjoy the conservatory as it was meant to be seen.







"There you are, making history..."

-Chosen Brothers, "Making History" [BM 009]

#### INTO THE UNKNOWN

Sometimes I fool myself into thinking that I understand music completely. After all, I have access to it like never before: on vinyl, CD, DVD and MP3, as .wav and .aiff files, in my car, on my home stereo and on my computer. I have better access to music than I do to healthy food. But I don't understand it. Music is still a mystery, an unknown force channeled in the same way now as when humans first sang songs in campfire groups and communicated using environmental sounds.

WORDS DEREK GRAY IMAGE NOPATTERN

Music made by elusive artists is nothing new, but in the computer age any attempt to decipher digital sound messages is a complex task. To quote America's diction-challenged Secretary of Defense Donald Rumsfeld about WMDs in Iraq, within music there are many "known unknowns." Followers of Berlin's Basic Channel, a duo comprised of Mark Ernestus and Moritz von Oswald, would probably put them in this category. But after years listening to the pair's output on their minimal techno label Basic Channel and their dub reggae Burial Mix imprint, their music starts to explain itself.

Mournful, slow waves of bass ebb like an oil-slicked sweh in the middle of the Atlantic on the Chosen Brothers' "Making History" 10" single. Issued in 2002 and collected on the CD *Rhythm & Sound with the Artists* (Burial Mix/Asphodel) the song is a good example of what Ernestus and von Oswald have done, musically and philosophically: they've made history while making subtle, intricate machine music unlike any other. In addition to running Basic Channel and Burial Mix, they operate another five imprints–Rhythm & Sound, Main Street, Chain Reaction, M-Series and Basic Replay–in addition to maintaining the Wackies reggae reissue series.

A Google search of information on Basic Channel only turns up four substantive entries: *The Wire*'s two excellent stories on Basic Channel and Rhythm & Sound, an All Music.com item, and, if you're lucky, a *Jockey Slut* article from 2003. After that, your sources become sketchy. Considering how influential the prolific decade-old label and production team has been, their low press profile has raised nagging questions. When I attempted a Q&A with the group recently, I got my answers.

After some miscommunication with Basic Channel's American PR company concerning the format and execution of our proposed talk (BC doesn't do written Q&A email interviews or allow quotes to be recorded from telephone



Of the singles amassed between 1992 and 2002-nine on Basic

Channel, eight on M, thirteen on Burial Mix and a further seven on

Rhythm & Sound-virtually all are Ernestus and von Oswald productions.

Both brought their vices as record collectors and studio junkies to the

table, along with von Oswald's training as a musician, but the twosome's

shared final output was greater than each individual's contributions.

Adding to their aesthetic, minimal label artwork-an ink splotched "M" on

the M-Series, microscopic cellular-looking images on Basic Channel-

and a simple grey, beige and black color scheme matches their austere

The duo hasn't ignored other artists either. On the contrary, a series of 35 singles and nearly a dozen CDs by Porter Ricks (Thomas Köner and Andy Mellwig), Scion (Pete Kuschnereit a.k.a. Substance and Rene Löwe a.k.a. Vainqueur), Monolake (consisting then of Ableton programmer Robert Henke and Ableton co-founder Gerhard Behles) and Vladislav Delay (a.k.a. Luomo) were issued on Ernestus and von Oswald's Chain Reaction label. The two were keen to create different avenues for developing quality sound output while making Basic Channel self-sufficient.

In 1995, they opened Dubplates and Mastering, which houses a mastering studio plus a vinyl-cutting lathe for creating lacquer masters and dubplates (used by DJs to test out new tracks before they're pressed on regular vinyl). They both initially ran day-to-day operations at the studio (where Mellwig, Henke and Stefan Betke of Pole did time as engineers), and although they've lessened their involvement, they maintain a keen interest in the fields of vinyl mastering, pressing and distribution. Shortly after Dubplates and Mastering opened, Ernestus and von Oswald embarked on the next chapter of their Basic Channel adventure: productions as Rhythm & Sound and their new Burial Mix imprint.

#### SOUND BURIAL

A signature element of Burial Mix releases—which include singles by reggae stalwarts Cornell Campbell and Jennifer Lara, as well local talent like Paul St. Hilaire—are the records' earth-shakingly low bass frequencies. Ernestus and von Oswald are less concerned with the "lowness" of their subsonics than how intensely the bass is represented on each pressing. Any DJ who's dropped a Burial Mix 10" single knows that the bass registers very successfully.

The method behind Rhythm & Sound recordings varies depending on the singer, but each session starts with Ernestus and von Oswald creating a rough riddim, some chords, a tempo and a feeling for the song. Vocals are added either in Berlin, or pretty much anywhere an inspired singer wants to do them. St. Hilaire lives nearby the studio, allowing for extended sessions, multiple takes and improvisation. Alternately, singles by Jah Batta, Chosen Brothers, Shalom and the Love Joys were tracked in the Bronx at Lloyd "Bullwackie" Barnes's studio. In those cases, the duo created basic tracks on their laptops, recorded the singers on Wackies' mixing board and then finished the tunes back home in Berlin.

Ernestus and von Oswald's love of reggae goes back to the '80s when they came across original-pressing Wackies singles and albums. At the time, Wackies was dropping hard roots reggae 10"s, singles and dub albums. Over the years, Ernestus and von Oswald became friends with Wackies' UK rep Rae Cheddie, and later Rhythm & Sound were invited to do a version of the Wackies dub tune "Mango Walk" for an interactive CD-ROM project called *Header 2*, released by London record store Honest Jon's. Around the same time, things at Chain Reaction had slowed down a bit.

Eventually, the duo established a direct link with Barnes, although several years passed before the first round of Wackies re-releases came out in 2001. And they didn't just trickle out-singles and albums by Horace Andy, Sugar

Minott and Wayne Jarrett gushed in fours and fives at a time. Many serious reggae collectors were astounded that one of the most sought-after and obscure Jamaican-American imprints was now so readily available—with the releases containing their original artwork to boot.

Basic Channel already had a distribution and pressing network established, so the partnership was mutually beneficial for both the Berliners and for Barnes, who has historically been one of the most open-minded reggae label heads (for more on Wackies, read the full interview in *XLR8R* #67). You might assume from their meticulous label machinations that Basic Channel are perfectionist control freaks, but a closer look at their activities reveals Ernestus and von Oswald as bold enablers instead of stingy hoarders.

#### SOUND EXPANSIONS

After Paul St. Hilaire's debut CD, *Showcase*, was released on Burial Mix in 1998, a flurry of requests came for live PAs. Up to that point, Ernestus and von Oswald had only played live in the club/techno context a few times, and couldn't keep up with the demands of touring, running their businesses and maintaining their family lives. Luckily, longtime friends and Hard Wax employees Kuschnereit and Löwe of Scion were familiar enough with both the style and live mix techniques for St. Hilaire's performances, and they stepped in to continue the tours. With their bases covered, Ernestus and von Oswald delved into the Wackies reissue series, released more singles on Burial Mix, and continued to unceasingly explore new frontiers in sound processing.

Early tracks on Basic Channel found Ernestus and von Oswald exploring different approaches to signal routing, machine wiring and production effects. They always worked one track at a time until an EP was finished, and each EP became part of a series (Basic Channel, Main Street, etc.). Ideas from previous records often became the basis for new releases. For example, 1995's M-Series "4.5" was based on elements from Round Two's "New Day" on Main Street. Basic Channel had already begun dubbing and versioning their own work before they ever worked overtly in a reggae idiom.

But describing the exact sounds one hears on a Basic Channel release is not so easy. You can reference soft four/four kicks that often get lost in a swirling, echoing synth fog. You can discuss the interlocking rhythmic patterns that blur the lines between slow and fast percussive elements. But ultimately, none of these starting points does justice to what is simply multifaceted minimalist techno.

What can be known about Basic Channel is what physically exists on their vast catalog of wax and CDs. This body of work speaks to their techniques, inspirations and emotions. I now understand their verbal silence in the press, but am still lost in *my* quest to completely understand their music. Some mysteries will never be solved.

Order any of the Basic Channel catalog at www.basicchannel.com. Visit Hard Wax Records in Berlin at Paul-Lincke-Ufer 44a, or call 49 -30 -611 301 11. www.hardwax.com



# 

FRIENDSHIP, CONFLICT AND FOCUS HAVE HELPED BRITISH DUO PSYCHONAUTS MAKE A FLAWLESS DEBUT ALBUM.

WORDS ANNA CHAPMAN IMAGES MARCUS CLACKSON

SOMETIMES
WE WANTED TO
GET IN
THE STUDIO,
BUT COULDN'T
AFFORD IT.
WE HAD TO BEG
PEOPLE TO
GIVE US
MONEY.

Life-long friendships usually go one of two routes: they either evolve into mature associations in which buddies continue to share interests and respect each other's space, or they fizzle into frictional tugs-of-war with neither side able to let go. Pablo Clements and Paul Mogg, the former schoolmates who comprise British punk dance duo the Psychonauts, have gone both routes while favoring the more acerbic of the two. But in music, friction can have its uses.

For example, tension probably made the Psychonauts' debut, *Songs For Creatures*, an album of many moods. Its lush instrumentals weave effortlessly among peak-time electro and melancholic pop songs, creating one of the most musically varied albums of 2003. Mogg, who met Clements while in school in Yeovil, Somerset, in the west of England, puts it down to sheer eclecticism: "Although we DJ in clubs all the time, we don't just listen to club music." And while many of today's DJs make the same claim, a quick glance at the Psychonauts' back catalogue shows that they've built their reputation on shared maverick tastes.

Mogg, the blonde one, was five when he met Clements. "It started with breakdance. At school we'd do [pause] tapes and make songs that way. We've always been tight friends." But after two decades, it's becoming

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increasingly rare to catch the two together; they often DJ separately under the Psychonauts guise. Mogg claims Clements's fear of flying prevents foreign gigs ("He needs to sort it out," he moans). But when I catch up with a cheery post-Christmas Clements, he's looking forward to a football/DJ tour for the European Cup with David Holmes this summer. "We DJ and they buy us tickets for the matches. Mogg can't stand football. I couldn't until I moved to London."

Growing up alongside Mogg and Clements in Yeovil was DFA main man Tim Goldsworthy, which is bizarre considering that the town's more known for farming than innovative dance music. Mogg explains how the Psychonauts came into being: "Tim was working with James Lavelle and we gave him a tape, which was a complete mixture of stuff-hip-hop instrumentals, house, techno and acid all mixed together really smoothly. James loved the tape and asked us to DJ at a few things."

In fact, Lavelle loved the Psychonauts' style-blending abilities so much that he asked the duo to produce a mix album of Mo Wax's greatest hits. In 1998, long before 2ManyDJs compiled As Heard On Radio Soulwax Pt 2, Mogg and Clements packed 50 tracks onto Time Machine: A Mo Wax Retrospective Mix. "Rather than choosing 12," Mogg notes, "we wanted to get as many on there in 45 minutes as we could."

Naturally, when they started work on the follow-up to their first single, 1999's "Hot Blood," they weren't going to stick to its fashionable punk-funk formula. Says Mogg: "We always wanted to make an album that was totally across the board like the music that we're into." With influences ranging from Radiohead to Underground Resistance and Arthur Russell, it was inevitable that many tracks (or "nightmares," as Clements jokingly refers to the rejects) didn't make the final edit. Clements says that "there's been a fair few fights making that record," while Mogg claims the struggle hasn't just been over taste. "Sometimes we wanted to get in the studio and finish stuff, but couldn't afford to do it. We had to beg people to give us money."

Luckily, according to Clements, Songs For Creatures wasn't expensive to make because they did most of the work themselves and played all the instruments. He estimates that the split between real music and samples is 50/50. "We've always insisted that we were going to make an album out of samples that didn't sound like samples," says Clements. "Back in the day we were scratch DJs, and we've always spent lots of time going round second-hand record shops all over the world and buying old records for sampling."

Songs For Creatures' natural flow resembles a journey, but Clements dismisses the idea that it's in any way autobiographical, citing the tune "Hips For Scotland" (sung by Scotlish folk singer James Yorkston) as an example. "I've only been to Scotland five times. We wrote all the music on the album, but relied on the vocalists to write the words. I can sing in the shower, that's about it." He says he has no idea what "Hips..." is about: "[Yorkston] just sings about other people's girlfriends, doesn't he?"

According to Mogg, Yorkston (who heads his own Edinburgh-based band the Athletes) turned up at a New Years party at his flat in West London. "We ended up talking and drinking whiskey. I played him some demos and he liked them. I'm a massive fan of Nick Drake and I think his voice is comparable to that." The other vocalists were drawn from what Clements calls "rubbish friends," by which he means people he knows. One of these is former Bananarama and Shakespear's Sister star Siobhan Fahey. "She's a friend of Clements' girlfriend and we used her studio," explains Mogg. "She was around one day and liked that track so we asked her to do backing vocals." Clements says that the main appeal of working with friends was that "we could spend weeks working on a track together. It was more like how a band works with a singer."

Friendship dynamics caused *Songs For Creatures* to be released on Gigolo too. Initially, Mogg wasn't keen on the partnership. "A friend of mine started doing A&R for Gigolo and wanted to hear the album. I didn't give him a copy because I didn't think Gigolo was the right label. Eventually he nicked a copy and played it to [Gigolo label honcho DJ] Hell, who was really enthusiastic. Hell said he wanted to change direction of the label and this was the perfect album to launch that."

Making the album took its toll on Mogg and Clements' friendship, and they're currently pursuing solo projects. "We're taking a break from each other," admits Mogg, who's producing the debut album for Songs... guest vocalist (and next rising star from Yeovil) Jason Rowe. Meanwhile, Clements is producing Output Records band Gramme's next album. "I've kind of joined them," he says. Although Songs For Creatures has been rapturously received, they're not in a hurry to get back into the studio together and produce the follow up. Says Clements: "To get to the next level you need money, and no label is handing that out at the moment. Björk said it was one of her favorite albums—we might consider making another one if she comes knocking at our door."

www.gigolo-records.de



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# LESS ISBEST

EXPLORE 20 YEARS WITH MYSTERIOUS MINIMALIST IMPRINT TOUCH, WHO MARRY A PALETTE OF MUSIC, DESIGN, PHOTOGRAPHY, PACKAGING AND PHILOSOPHY.

#### WORDS SUSANNA BOLLE ARTWORK JON WOZENCROFT

#### **TOUCH UP**

British label Touch has always exuded mystery. From their earliest cassette publications—which combined esoteric written texts, photographs and music—to their recent, beautifully packaged compact discs, Touch releases have resisted being easily interpreted or classified. Although they've built the UK's most revered experimental music imprint, founders Mike Harding, Jon Wozencroft and Andrew McKenzie have kept Touch something of an enigma.

Few labels can lay claim to a back catalog as rich and varied as that of this venerable UK experimental imprint. Since its inception in the early 1980s, Touch has published a litany of essential releases by such artists as subversive collagists The Hafler Trio, industrial percussion legend Z'ev, dream-pop luminaries Scala, microsonic trailblazer Ryoji Ikeda, field-recording specialist Chris Watson, avant-turntablist Philip Jeck, legendary New York minimalist composer Phill Niblock and guitarist/laptopist extraordinaire Christian Fennesz–to name but a tiny few.

Chances are their distinctive cover art has caught your eye while sifting through the bins at your local record store. Whether it's the luscious display of apples on Australian guitarist Oren Ambarchi's *Suspension*, the dusky blue coastline of Biosphere's ambient classic *Substrata*, or the alien cacti that adorns Rehberg & Bauer's *Psst*, the subtle combination of elegant type and evocative photography is as quintessentially Touch as

the music contained therein. Touch additionally functions as a multimedia publishing venture, a fact that Mike Harding and designer Jon Wozencroft (who together cofounded and oversee the imprint) take pains to emphasize.

"One of my little pet [peeves] is when people call us Touch Records," Harding confesses with a hint of cheerful exasperation. "We're not called Touch Records—we're called Touch, because we're not a record label. If the point of a record label is to promote bands, then that's not what we do. We don't use the conventions of the record business to function."

"Where this really began," he continues, "was with an aesthetic and the marriage of audio and visuals, which is like a permanent, ongoing conversation between the two media. That can be reflected either in the CD production itself, where there's the aesthetic of the imagery, or in the live environment, where Jon will show a film or slides behind or alongside the sound being produced. It's like 1 + 1 = 3. The idea is to get that third, magical element out of marrying the two disciplines."

#### **GETTING GRAPHIC**

Rewind 20 years to Touch's inception, and the audio-visual union at the heart of the matter is thrown into starker relief. Touch's inaugural release was 1982's Feature Mist, the first in a series of six immensely influential and beautifully produced cassette





magazines (Meridians 1 & 2, Touch Travel, Ritual: Lands End, and Ritual: Magnetic North). These elaborate, full-color publications featured an eclectic mix of audio, written text and graphics. There was music by bands like New Order, Psychic TV and Test Department, as well as work by composers like Dmitri Shostakovich. There were texts by Greil Marcus, Jon Savage and Vladimir Mayakovsky, accompanied by stunning graphic and aesthetic manifestos by the likes of Wozencroft, Neville Brody, Peter Saville and Panni Charrington.

According to Wozencroft, Touch intended these magazines' intricate audio-visual-textual dialogues to function as raw ingredients for a personal cinematic experience. "We were trying to say: if film is the most powerful medium of the twentieth century, what can you do with two-dimensional print and sound media that will give you the same kind of impact or intimacy? We would basically present somebody with the script and the stills and the soundtrack and get them to make their own film."

Touch released the last of the magazine series, *Ritual: Magnetic North*, in 1986, and the following year released their first artist CD, Soliman Gamil's *The Egyptian Music.* At that point, Touch began to look a little more like a proper record label, yet the cinematic ambition remained. These days, their dreams are realized though the delicate interplay between the music and Wozencroft's distinctive packaging and (more literally) short films, both of which make use of untreated images—no filters or post-production effects are used—and primarily deal with subjects from the natural world.

Their objective is not to set up a simple one-to-one correlation between sound and image, but to create a more dynamic relationship—a visual counterpoint to the music. "For instance," Wozencroft explains, "with Christian Fennesz, an obvious thing for *Endless Summer* is to have a picture of a beach on the cover. But that's not very interesting, because the beach is already there in the sound. So if you take Fennesz's sound and then put a tractor on the cover [as Wozencroft did on *Field Recordings: 1995-2002*], well then, what's all that about? It starts to have a tension with the music that opens up another unconscious world, which can be very powerful."

#### **QUALITY CONTROL**

This kind of intense communication between Touch and its artists extends beyond issues of design, with Harding and Wozencroft playing roles roughly analogous to those of publisher and editor. This necessitates a good deal of critical give-and-take. "We're very free with our opinions, and if we have something to say then we'll say it," says Harding. "And that's stood us in good stead over the years. We've built up a body of respect, that's why we've got a very stable [set] of artists that we work with. We've learned how to develop a relationship with the artist in a constructive way. One of the big issues for us at the moment is that very few artists understand that they need to be edited. There's very little discipline in art or sound at the moment. People just mass-produce—they overproduce—when really they should be making less."

Both Harding and Wozencroft realize such pleas for quality control and restraint leave them open to charges of elitism, crypto-fascism and so forth. Neither shies away from offering pointed and often unpopular critiques. At one point in our conversation, Wozencroft laments the buzz surrounding Matthew Barney, whose *Cremaster* series he had just seen in New York. "If I was a young artist and saw that and was told that was what I should aspire to, I'd do a Jackson Pollock pretty quickly," he says before meditating on Touch's role within the current social climate.

"The most important underlying thing that Mike and I see-and it's difficult to talk about, because it's a kind of moral question-is that [we're] doing something to try to make things better, whatever better is. You get accused of all kinds of things, 'pretentious' being the least of it, once you start talking in these terms. But I think we do things that we love doing and we hope that people agree they're interesting. The drive behind it is to try to present a critical counterpoint to all of this mediocre and basically lifeless material that's being presented as important, when it's just not important at all. It's just stuff."

www.touchmusic.org.





#### ARTISTS TELL US WHY THEY WORK WITH TOUCH:



**Phill Niblock:** They have great presence in the market of [experimental] music. And I'm happy to be part of the music in their definition. [They've got] great access to press, great distribution, a very select set of artists and a very business-like attitude.



Oren Ambarchi: First of all, it's a great label, and most of their releases have always been interesting to me. I'm a fan of Niblock, [Rafael] Toral, Fennesz, etc. I've always tried to keep up with Touch's releases and artists, so it's great to be working with a label that I've always admired (since The Hafler Trio days). Quality is their number one priority. Jon's design and images are absolutely beautiful, and their packaging is top-notch. The distribution is excellent—it's nice to know that you can work on a release and that people will actually get to hear it! Another important point is how clear the communication is between the artists and Mike and Jon. They're both a pleasure to work with. We communicate quite often, which is really important.



**B J Nilsen (Hazard):** Touch cares a great deal about the end result of the product. I feel that no part of the process is rushed. I find them to be very supportive. Instead of just handing over a demo for a release, you get them to be interactive and creative with the work.

# BAILE SIN FRON-TERAS

THE MUTEK EN MEXICO TOUR BECOMES A QUEST FOR THE COUNTRY'S ELECTRONIC UNDERGROUND. XLR8R UNCOVERS THE ROOTS, THE RAVERS AND LA RAZA IN THESE SNAPSHOTS FROM MEXICO.

**WORDS AND IMAGES PHILIP SHERBURNE** 

The gringo in my hotel, a rangy 20-something in shorts and a polo shirt, seems amused that I'm a music journalist, and moreover that I've come to Tijuana for a story. "Electronic music, huh?" he shrugs, confessing that he hasn't bought a new CD since Audioslave's debut. "Is that like dance music?" He doesn't have time to follow music: he's a professional gambler (if first-year losses of \$15,000 can make you a "professional") who's more or less living in the Hotel Pueblo Amigo, located all of a half-mile south of the border, for the duration of football season.

Every day he works his spreadsheets and installs himself in front of the banks of TVs broadcasting everything from college basketball to dog-racing in the lobby franchise of Calientel, a local sports-betting operation.

It's a shame that I don't think to invite him to the local festivities for MUTEK en Mexico, the Montreal electronic-music festival's ten-day tour of Mexico City, Guadalajara and Tijuana. The Saturday night party doesn't just feature the *crème de la crème* of the Montreal scene–Crackhaus, Egg, The Mole, Vince Lemieux–and a rare collaborative appearance by the Nortec Collective's Bostich, Panoptica and Fussible. It also draws several thousand ravers to a disused Jai Alai palace on Avenida Revolución, a setting in which the gambler would feel right at home.

#### SURVEY THE SCENE

After ten days in search of Mexico's experimental underground, nothing much surprises me any more. The night before, the bill is a who's who of Northern Mexican experimental electronica–Murcof, Fax, Panoptica–and the club is filling up. Partiers, mostly in their

20s, come dressed in a style that can only be described as International Hipster: trucker caps and arty logo t-shirts (many by Tijuana's tongue-in-cheek NaCo label) for men, flirty heels and low-slung jeans for women. The only clue that you might be in Tijuana is the occasional Stetson or pair of cowboy boots, but even these are worn with Diesel and Levi's Red, the accoutrements of cosmopolitan youth from Finland to Tierra del Fuego.

The club itself is done up in classic \*wallpaper style, minimalist and utterly over-the-top all at once. You'd never expect it from the street outside, though. While Tijuana is most famous for Avenida Revolución–a tacky strip of titty bars, betting joints, and tourist photo-ops with burros and sombreros–this bar is tucked strip-mall-style into a suburban side street between an overdone Italian restaurant and a TGI Friday's.

If you go looking for underground electronic music in Mexico, don't think you'll find it in anything that looks like Berlin bunkers, Brooklyn warehouses or Oakland basements. But you may stumble upon a gig in an airy gallery like Mexico City's Arte Alameda, a reconfigured church that was given over last November to sound-art installations by the likes of Germany's Granular Synthesis, and a series of collaborations between local lanton musicians and Montreal artists like Deadheat and Tim Hecker

You might feel at home in a seedily stylish club like Mexico City's La Rioma, where the mirrored walls and glass tables seem expressly designed with cocaine intake in mind. Still, the cement columns are designated earthquake "safety zones" (the windows, on the other hand, read "zona de peligro"), and the iconic Mexican comedian Cantinflas lingers in spirit—he owned the pizzeria that used to occupy the club's space.

More striking still is the converted convent in Mexico City where 1,000 party-goers



raved 'til morning in an open-air courtyard and the temperature before dawn was 40°F at best. At an outdoor venue in Guadalajara, some 8,000 attendees flocked to a free concert featuring Montreal's Akufen, Egg and Crackhaus-names almost certainly unknown to the majority in the crowd, and despite the fact that the local punters were more accustomed to "psycotrance."

But creative venues and popular curiosity aside, it becomes increasingly clear that Mexico's electronic-music underground is still emerging into an uncertain future. In Guadalajara, two despondent ravers tell me that even progressive house is deemed obscurely underground; as we speak, clanging industrial music spills from the Museo de Arte de Zapopan as festival attendees gradually trickle outside, seeking refuge from the noise.

Still, electronic music, in its most globalized form, isn't hard to find. Driving through Mexico City's clothing district, where synthetic fabrics flutter on sidewalk racks and barkers hawk their wares on loudspeakers, I'm struck when I hear a drunken horn figure, Doppler-melted, that sounds like the most exotic thing in the world. A second later an aggressive snare roll rips through the wilting tones, and it turns out to be the same basic trance heard from Grozny to Goa, as limp and flimsy as the nylon dresses on display.

#### STRIKING GOLD

There's no lack of talent in Mexico. Tijuana's Nortec Collective-a shifting configuration comprised of Fussible (Pepe Mogt, a.k.a. Latinsizer), Bostich (Ramon Amezcua), Panoptica (Roberto Mendoza), Terrestre (Fernando Corona, a.k.a. Murcof) and othershas garnered the most attention in North America and Europe. This is thanks in no small part to the fact that their aesthetic, folding traditional Mexican elements like norteño and mariachi into electronic dance music, plays with stereotypes about Northern Mexico.

But Corona's work as Murcof-which fuses Morton Feldman's classical ambience with minimal techno-proves that Mexican artists don't need to fall back on localism to be relevant. While more commercially oriented labels like Guadlajara's Nopal Beat have tread a relatively obvious path that fuses pan-Latin styles to deep house rhythms, other artists in that city have ignored their heritage entirely, situating themselves in a global context.

One of the most promising is Carrie, whose live sets of laptop, guitar and vocals draw unmistakable comparisons to Lali Puna and Tujiko Noriko, both of whom she cites as primary influences upon her music, which she sings in English.

In Mexico City, a strong tradition of computer music and *musique concrete*, as well as an entrenched industrial scene, has led to an even more idiosyncratic dynamic, outlined by the likes of Igloo Records' Arthur Henry Fork and Manrico Montero, who draw upon microsound and atonal computer composition.

And in Mexico City's dance music scene, which draws mainly from the cosmopolitan upper middle class, playlists (such as those of Imeca Music's Martín Parra) run a globalized gamut from mainstream techno to German microhouse—solidly jet-set fare. One of the capital's most interesting young producers, the 19-year-old Plug (no relation to Luke Vibert's project of the same name), clearly takes cues from Germany and Montreal: his demo CD thumps and tickles like a clumsy *lucha libre* between Dimbiman and Akufen.



A rhizomatic network of producers, promoters, DJs and fans has spread across Mexico, forging bonds with nascent scenes from Colombia to Chile as well as with more established communities in Buenos Aires. It's too early to call it an explosion: audience support seems sparse and strangely half-hearted, and the quality of Mexican electronica is admittedly mixed, aside from a handful of established talents.

"Being Latin American and doing electronic music, you're really putting yourself in a narrow niche," admits Mendoza. Downloading is rampant, exports are nil and the country's economic divide restricts participation to those members of the middle class with money to buy records, gear and plane tickets.

But the movement bears watching, especially as contacts across the Americas swell the pan-Latin scene. And the players' enthusiasm is hard to resist: as Riqui Martinez de Castro, one of the coordinators of MUTEK's Tijuana stop, explained, "In Northern Mexico, we're natural optimists. We rejoice when we see a rock with a plant growing out of it, because there's life where there was none."

It would be an insult to say there was "no life" in Mexico before techno took root, but each unexpected epiphany, like Murcof's radiant live set, does seem like a bright green shoot-especially in Tijuana, where the soil is grey and strewn with trash.

#### **ANYTHING GOES**

Did I say nothing surprised me about Mexico's electronic music scene? I take that back. Midway through Murcof's Tijuana performance-a solo laptop concert that reprises his

sublime chamber-glitch album Martes, though fuller and deeper-Panoptica's Mendoza, looking a foot taller in his white cowboy hat, taps me on the shoulder, gesturing to the gaunt Anglo sitting to my left. "Do you see him?" asks Mendoza. In fact, I had been wondering who he was, with his Caesar cut and leather blazer. "That's David J."

My brain, slowed by perhaps one too many Tecates, gradually pulls the name from the database, "David J-as in David J from Bauhaus? Love and Rockets?" Lask, incredulous. (That would explain the Tijuana goth that had scampered up to have her photograph taken with him.)

One and the same. Now living somewhere in the Southwest-whether it was Southern California or Northern Mexico was never quite clear-he had approached Mendoza after a Panoptica gig and asked to work with him. An hour later, the two are onstage: Mendoza hunched over his laptop, the brim of his hat shading his eyes, and David J standing with his bass slung low, thumping away at a repetitive bassline that screws deeply into the house groove.

Who would have thought it possible-one of the architects of New Wave jamming two decades later with a representative of a new movement, one more obscure but with far more global potential. The mind reeled to think where, in 20 years time, Mendoza might find himself, his white hat bobbing in time to a fusion as yet undiscovered.

For a further rundown of the Mutek En Mexico tour, check www.mutek.ca.

For more on Murcof, go to www.posteverything.net.



# LOS ANGELES

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blunt girl

# PHOTOGRAPHER JESSICA MILLER PHOTOGRAPHER'S ASSISTANT INDRA DUNIS STYLIST CHRISTIAAN GÜNTHER AT WORKGROU STYLIST'S ASSISTANT LISA FLORES HAIR & MAKEUP HETHER BECKREST AT WORKGROUP CONCEPT VIVIAN HOST MODELS TOBY DIXON (Sausage Group), ALEXA (Look Models) ANTHONY (civilian), HEATHER (Quan Ltd.), JONAS (civilian), ROBYN (Look Models) SHOT IN SAN FRANCISCO AT KING DINER, ROCKET SATURDAYS AT CAT CLUB AND MILK. SPECIAL THANKS TO RANDY AND JENNIFER OTTER. ALEXA: jumpsuit Adidas Originals, tie vintage Pucci, heels Dior, earrings Oc HEATHER: jumper Adidas, dress OP Classic, boots Timberland, hat Hang Lo ROBYN: pea coat Reconstrukt, earrings Octohorse

# 







(L to R opposite page):
ROBYN: skirt Leroy's Girl, earrings Octohorse, shoes Manolo Blahnik, scarf Versace, watch vintage Gucci
JONAS: shirt Christian Dior, pants DVS, slippers DVS
ALEXA: dress Mittenmaker, ankle garters Miss Maya Designs, wrist cuff Peter Barana, shoes Prada
HEATHER: top Leroy's Girl, dayglo skirt M is for Morals, earrings Octohorse, shoes Christian Dior
ANTHONY: t-shirt Futura for Recon, pants Bathing Ape, shoes Helmut Lang for Adidas

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(L to R)
ALEXA: mini-dress Lip Service, wrist cuff Peter Barana
HEATHER: top Annie O, jeans Seven Jeans, shoes Christian Dior
ROBYN: top and shorts DC Shoes girls, dogtags Prada. (opposite page)
ALEXA: ankle garters Miss Maya Designs, jacket vintage Helmut Lang, shoes Manolo Blahnik



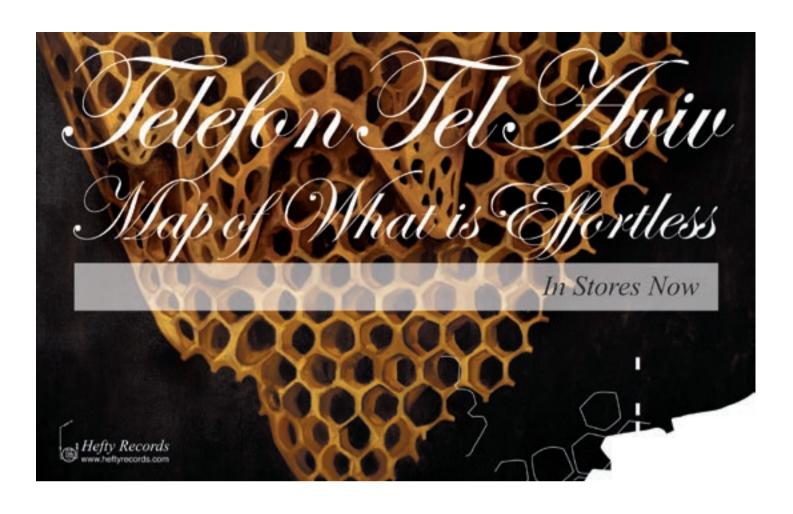
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# AMMON CONTACT SOUNDS LIKE EVERYTHING Plug Research/US/CD EL-P WITH THE BLUE SERIES CONTINUUM HIGH WATER Thirsty Ear/US/CD NEUNG PHAK NEUNG PHAK Abduction/US/CD LUKE VIBERT KERRIER DISTRICT Rephlex/UK/LP

If you follow new music, you know that side projects are the lifeblood of any niche scene. Enabled by the conveniences of production in the digi-tech age, and fuelled by independent music's populist DIY agenda, musicians and producers now find it easier to produce and team up freely under multiple names. Although you seemingly need three PDAs to keep track of them all, side projects-whether collaborations or aliaseshave (to paraphrase Mao) truly let a hundred flowers bloom in the music world.

Some collabs simply satisfy the listener when the two artists have empathetic tastes, as is the case with LA's Ammon Contact on their debut album, Sounds Like Everything. Comprised of veteran beatmaker Fabian Ammon Alston, AC delivers a 20track manifesto on the post-hip-hop aesthetic. Between the minimalist sliver-sample funk of "House Plants," the densely layered ritualized percussion of "Encouragement" and the overall dub-tinged aesthetic, Sounds finds these two genreboundary dissolvers to be a perfect match.

You wouldn't think third-wave hip-hop explorer EI-P would mesh as well producing veteran hard bop/free-jazz ensemble the Blue Series Continuum, but goddamn if these guys haven't put together a burner with High Water. Highlighted by a warphop version of the standard "Yesterday (When I Was Young),"

dogged post-bop moments like "Sunrise Over Bklyn," and demidrum & bass runnings like "Get Modal," this sextet-plus-knobtwiddler combo trumps similar tries by DJ Spooky and others to roll "serious jazz" at the hip-hop generation.

Aliases are the magically easy means by which artists take any left turns they want. Take Oakland's hyper-eclectic performance rock band Mono Pause-in its incarnation as Neung Phak, it draws from the modern pop and commercial sounds of Thailand, Cambodia, Vietnam and Taiwan. Featuring Dynasty bassist Diana Hayes as principle singer, Neung Phak blazes through 15 tracks that range from groovy '60s pop to upbeat, violin-infused '80s synth-bump with violin and punky rave-ups. Highlighted by frenetic tunes like "Ko Muay De Ka" (which goes from "Hey Mickey"-ish stomp into subdued soul-jazz, techno and Latin in its first two minutes), Neung Phak reflects the alchemical genius that ensues when a developing country appropriates Western motifs.

Meanwhile, with all the guises he's got, the dizzyingly prolific Carlos Niño (of ancient-futurist ensemble Hu Vibrational) and Luke Vibert (who also operates as Wagon Christ, Plug and Amen Andrews) raises no eyebrows by using his given name to release his Kerrier District album. But he does raise some blood pressures by eschewing his usual drum & bass and acid exercises with a double-vinyl set of solidly fonky discohouse grooves. Toss on the dissonant and spacey dancefloor fave "Disco Bus," the jazzy mover "Yesco" or the rare-groovin' "Silhouettes" when your next house party starts laggin' and you'll thank the Gods of Side Projects for the bounty they've bestowed. Ron Nachmann



## CHROMEO SHE'S IN CONTROL Vice-Atlantic/US/CD

It's no easy task to send up Prince, Cameo, Hall and Oates and Stevie B at the same time and sound professional while doing it, but Montrealers Chromeo pull it off on their debut, **She's In Control.** Armed with analog synths and more vocal effects than Justin Timberlake. the duo electric slides through nine tracks purpose-built to piss off techno purists and ignite club nights from Denmark to Des Moines. Sure, the porno swing and thrusting drum pulse of "Needy Girl" are ideas stolen straight from Timex Social Club's "Rumors." Yes, "Mercury Music Play." But Chromeo succeeds where groups like W.I.T. and Avenue D have failed, infusing a two-decade-old formula with modern-day wit and musical talent. The only place *She's In* Control has to prove itself is on the dancefloor, and it does. Vivian Host

#### 310 RECESSIONAL IOW ARAI MIND EDIT

Leaf/IJK/CD

#### Breaking through the glitch of 310's heavily processed machine music is a searing vision of futuristic fusion. Taking the folktronic path led by Four Tet, then veering sharply off course, 310 creates darkly beautiful tunes with a raw, tarnished edge. Likewise, labelmate Riow Arai unerringly pieces together compositions that deconstruct the breaks, beats and funk of hip-hop. Though the first few tracks are reminiscent of El-P's dirty android beats, numbers like "Gyrate," "Break Roads" and "I Dine At Daybreak" shake and shimmy with an unparalleled sense of ease. Mind Edit offers a fascinating glimpse at the genre's future,

albeit one filtered through a burnished lens. Christine Hsieh

#### 60 CHANNELS COVERT MOVEMENTS Sunacrucial/US/CD

Raw emotion is filtered through fine-tuned production on 60 Channels' Covert Movements, which takes you through sensuous downtempo sounds before dropping you in more banging drum & bass terrain. The trip is guided by LA-based producer The Angel, who is assisted along the way by ragga MC Navigator, smoothedout reggae man DJ Collage, and vocalists Angie Hart and Rain Phoenix. The journey ends with the best tune of the album, "Moving Shadows," a jazzy, upbeat number that will leave you satisfied and fiending at the same time. Julia Chan

#### **AELTERS ARDCHILDS' COM.UNDO** Sonig/GER/CD

PowerBook jester Aelters apparently left DAT Politics because the loopy French laptop quartet weren't wacky enough. This should give you an inkling of the fractured digital dementia splattered all over Ardchilds' Com. Undo's 16 tracks, which find Aelters blowing mocking raspberries at "serious" techno and IDM tropes. While Ardchilds' may strike some as trifling and absurd, the disc contains flashes of irreverent brilliance. Spluttering, rough-hewn abstract techno tracks like "Starapeakotop" and "Porkfesonli" take bytes out of Cylob's hard drive while "Hombrero"'s industrial clank and piledriver funk rhythms bump rambunctiously like late-'90s Si Begg. If nothing else. Aelters's spazztronics forever torch the misconception that electronic music is a strictly humorless endeavor. Dave Segal



#### GRAN HOTEL BUENOS AIRES Eighteenth Street Lounge/US/CD N BELTRAN IN FULL COLOR lbiauitv/US/CD

ouncing their renown as middleow dubstrumentalists, DC's Thievery

orporation redeems itself by producing Argentinean guitarist Federico Aubele's

splendid debut. Of particular note is Aubele's vocal collaborator

Sumaia, who rides her colleague's tender guitar plucking with ease, soundtracking a breathtaking sunset in the mind's eye. No stranger to Latinate techniques, Beltran files another sumptuous installment, tweaking the tempo with a panoply of percussive tools; shakers bongos and the all-powerful clap. Where Aubele's record is steeped in Thievery's glutinous mecha-dub, Beltran takes a subtler route, coating his organic elements with a thin veneer of electronic effects, skillfully blurring the boundary where machines end and man begins. Martin Turenne

#### ADAWI CLONES & FALSE PROPHETS

ROIR/US/CD

Master percussionist Raz Mesinai continues to stake out iconoclastic territory on his fifth Badawi album. Since 1996, he's moved with furious inventiveness from illbient dub to ominous Middle Eastern exotica to drum-circle jams to horror-film scores. (Call him the Israeli-American Muslimgauze at your own risk.) Clones & False Prophets is Badawi's post-rock move. Raz and New York ringers like guitarist Marc Ribot and drummer Ben Perowsky churn out cinematic, ceremonial pieces like a less aggro Savage Republic while retaining elements from past Badawi efforts. The Middle East's violence tension and melancholy still haunt Mesinai, but he's found a new way to transmute them into art. Dave Segal

## CHARIZMA & PEANUT BUTTER WOLF BIG SHOTS

Stones Throw/US/CD

Only the good die young. When a bullet cut 20-year old Charizma's life short in December of 1993, it felled one of hip-hop's brightest talents. On this 15-song collection (recorded from 1991 to 1993), Charizma and Peanut Butter Wolf sound like the West Coast chapter of the Native Tongues. Charizma's voice brims with eagerness. enthusiasm and earnestness: Wolf's textured, jazzy beats epitomize boom bap and are a sign of great things to come. Charizma deals with topics from drinking apple juice and talking to girls to battling MCs and dissing R&B (remember when rappers hated the smooth shit?). Listening to this album might just make you fall in love with hip-hop all over again. Ross Hogg

## RISTOPHE CHARLES UNDIRECTED 1992-2002

Sub Rosa/RFI /CD

If the fabled "global village" mutates into an actual city, Christophe Charles has the soundtrack He collages field recordings into a scene in which Hamburg businessmen chat with Calcutta schoolchildren in a Bangkok traffic iam, while Japanese crickets and Italian dogs bicker into the night. In Undirected's liner notes. Charles insists that everything here is unmusical, as he let a computer randomly played his sound files. Yet the result is awfully symphonic, as drones and field noises saunter at a meditative pace. This is raw psychedelia for the Information Age. Cameron Macdonald



OSMIC MIND FI IGHT igerbeat6/US/CD I XIII FABUI OUS MUSCI ES 5RC/US/CD

Evil music is tricky: it needs to hypno tize and seduce before doing its work. Crack: W.A.R. knows this, using sweetand-sour sirens' voices to suck you in.

Then the sludgy electro beneath their songs gets sticky like guicksand, the drones cover all, and your only choice is to give in. On Fabulous Muscles, Xiu Xiu combines cheap electronics, acoustic strums and vortexes of noise into a jittery whole. An adolescent rant against bloodthirsty jocks and soldiers nearly sinks the entire thing. but leader Jamie Stewart later takes his fragile voice into more personal darkness, howling almost optimistically amid the surge and squall of "Clown Town." Rob Gearv

#### COTTONBELLY X AMOUNTS OF NICENESS

Wrong Records/US/CD

This side project from Sadé producer/sideman Stuart Matthewman channels all the pent-up artistic creativity accumulated during the eight long years between Sadé albums into 14 crucial-if not essential-tracks that effortlessly traverse the borders between R&B, electronic music, dancehall and dub. The "By Your Side" remix is more strident than anything on the narcolepsy-inducing Lovers Rock, while Maniit's Arab-esque vocals on "Take Me Away deliver discothegue exotica without becoming corny. Both tracks are trumped by a majestic re-fix of Gregory Isaacs's classic "Night Nurse"-a cover that somehow makes the Cool Ruler sound even cooler, Eric K. Arnold

#### DBEAT VS. STEPHEN BEAUPRE IT'S A CRACKHAUS THING Onitor/GER/CD

Scott Monteith may be best known for the rainforest tech-dub atmospherics he issued on his Deadbeat long-player Wildlife Documentaries. And Stephen Beaupre may be best known for his Canadian shuffle-tech as Multinass But

together, the two concoct a distinctly elastic form of minimal techno that shares its penchant for crackpot plunderphonia with fellow Montrealer Akufen and sample auteur Matthew Herbert. The eight tracks that make up Crackhaus are made for the giddy discotheque of vr mind, shunning seriousness at all costs to achieve the very serious goal of making you wiggle your smart ass. A noble endeavor, you must admit. Alexis Georgopoulos

#### **DEYAMPERT SHAPES AND COLORS**

Sonar Kollectiv/GER/CD

On his full-length debut Shapes and Colors, Cleveland, OH's Deyampert Giles serves up something different for neo-soul fans. Heavily influenced by mentors Jazzanova. Devampert presents swelling, organic downtempo and nu-jazz flavors, broken up by nelancholy acoustic guitar tracks that wouldn't be out of place on a Cat Stevens record. Vocalists Channeng Payton and Heather Clayton give the album more weight, and their liquid soul stylings and uplifting spoken-word interludes should appeal to fans of Floetry and Erykah Badu. Deyampert's not sounding any new notes-Trüby Trio and Dego have been here before-but he does a great job of layering texture, most evident on percussion-filled numbers like "It's You" and the aptly named, fuzzy house swinger "This Is The Dance Track on This Album." John Dark

#### D.I FIINK GHETTO HOUSE PIMPIN

Funk Records/US/CD

DJ JES AND FAST EDDIE BREAK THE SILENCE

Fresca/IIS/I P

If you keep it old school long enough, you'll eventually become cool again. One realizes this when listening to the two new albums from classic Chicago house producers DJ Funk and Fast Eddie. In the early '90s. Funk pioneered the "ahetto house" sound, which predated ghetto tech by about 10 years and 60 bpms. Funk hasn't moved on from his formula of pounding 808 house and dirty lyrics about booty and hoes, but Ghetto House Pimpin still sounds amazinaly funky and immediate if not futuristic. Hin-house progenitor Fast Eddie pursues more classic 4/4 avenues on his new LP with DJ Jes, Break The Silence, which veers between tribal house, gospel house and techno, but hits its stride with "DJ Jes and Fast Eddie Live," whose loopy funk recalls the more anthemic moments. of Derrick Carter and Basement Jaxx. Vivian Host

#### DUB NARCOTIC SOUND SYSTEM DEGENERATE INTRODUCTION K/IIS/CD

ECHO BASE SOUNDSYSTEM

Seed Knowledge/US/CD

That Calvin Johnson. He stirs things up better than an Oklahoma dust storm. The boy's got swamp mud running through his veins, and there's not an ironic bone in his body as he velps and moans alongside Heather Dunn (Lois Tiger Tran) on "Fuck Me Up" and the political rabble-rouser "Blood Flow." Degenerate Introduction is sexy, but not about sex; groovy, yet requiring nothing more than an enthusiastic and rhythmic head bobble. Echo Base also sports an unorthodox take on the bass, and is more mystical than any musical collective from Austin, Texas has a right to be. This is no by-the-river hippie mysticism; Echo Base displays an immaculate grounding in dub, and could be a serious contender to fill the niche in between iam bands and the Bubblecore label, Margaret Murray



#### PERPETUUM MOBILE Mute/US/CD II SA GOLD REGRETTEN? RIEN! Mean/AIIS/2xCD

Comparing these two releases is like comparing passion fruit and pomegranates-it's no easy task. Other than a shared Teutonic pedigree and the near-

legendary status of the artists involved, they could hardly be more different. Austria's Ilsa Gold-captured on this deluxe Mego two-CD compilation in all their perverse, mid-'90s helium-voxed glory-makes hyperkinetic, gleefully subversive, regret-free rave anthems By contrast Finstürzende Neubauten's latest Pernetuum Mobile, is a decidedly world-weary record. As befits the bleak excessiveness of the 21st century, singer Blixa Bargeld spins melancholic post-industrial, Weimar-esque torch songs for the morning after Susanna Rolle

#### FYM SAY NO TO PRIMATE RESEARCH LABS Telegraph/FRA/CD

n makes music that sounds as odd as his given name-Manutchehr Ghassemlou. We're talking a quirky blend of warped microhouse and exotic clicks 'n' cuts atmospheres, all of which carry a pranksterish undertow. It's as if Fym's angling to make you play the fool on the dancefloor-many cuts on Say No... seem designed to make you feel as if you have three left feet. While most of the 17 tracks on this debut album could slot into DJ sets alongside Sutekh, Si Begg or Pantytec, Say No... also embraces rreverent spirit of Rephlex Records' Braindance series. Fym's playful dance music is (im)pure joy. Dave Segal



#### OF GAB FOURTH DIMENSIONAL ROCKETSHIPS GOING LIP annum/US/CD

Taking a break between Blackalicious cords. Gift of Gab catches a rocketship the Northwest and cranks out a pure IC record backed up by solid soul beats. Seattle producers Jake One and Vitamin D handle the production, giving Gab's

tunes a relaxed shuffle with ample bass and piano melodies over uncomplicated midtempo beats. Gab himself sings several hooks and joins Lifesavas' Vursatyl to sound like hip-hop's Simon and Garfunkel on "Way of the Light." The focus here is on Gab's microphone gifts, as he tears up "some 'Pac shit" on "Stardust" overcomes a goofy hook on "The Writz" and provides his classic uplift on "Up," a booster rocket blasting through bad times. Gab turns on the full battle heat for "Just Because," burning it up just before he lands. Rob Geary



#### CLARA HILL RESTLESS TIMES Sonar Kollektiv/GER/CD KATE ROGERS ST. EUSTACIA Grand Central/IIK/CD

Clara Hill's Restless Times is neo-soul done right. At first, Hill carries the entire production with her voice alone. Halfway through the album, the instrumentals ante-up, delivering beats that are final-

clever enough compliment her vocal talent Restless Times mproves with time, climaxing with the glitch beat and heated vocals of "Flawless." Kate Rogers's St. Eustacia has the potential to be a gem, if you're an acoustic folk fan. With her trusty guitar in hand, she sings of love and other "deep" subjects like a more up-to-date version of the Cranberries' Dolores O'Riordan. If that's your bag, tracks like "Odyssey" and "The Apology" may be exactly what you've been searching for. Julia Chan

## HITZ EXPREZZ PLAYIN DA HARSEZ

Huron St. Hunt Club/CAN/CD

On *Playin Da Harsez*, Toronto's po-mo dandy Hitz Exprezz simultaneously takes inspiration from DAT Politics and Chingy, from Kid606 and the Kings of Crunk, Putting Hitz's glitch version of Beyoncé's "Crazy in Love" (called "Crazy in Plunk") aside, there are a lot worse ways for a suburban white boy to pay ironic homage to hip-hop than with poinging gabber ("Junk in the Crunk") and DIY punk cut-ups of ghetto house ("Late At Nite"). As with Chicks on Speed I'm not entirely sure that Plavin Da Harsez's harsh technol bounce is the sort of thing you want to listen to at home. But at a club, Hitz Exprezz is surely the prankster jockey to get electro boys' iodhpurs in a twist. Tyra Bangs

#### /DEX SEOSEXTEND Nexsound/UK/CD MOTOR FREEZE Kurn Neko/IIS/CD

So a Byelorussian and a Moscovite walk into a bar-no wait. I'm telling it wrong. The Byelorussian, I/Dex, walks block after block in the city rain, and the result is a pretty, dreary, minimal brokenbeat ode to squelchy galoshes, wheedling crickets and triangles of rainfall illuminated in the evening by street lamps. Moscow's Motor walks through what sounds like an office building at night, when all the miniscule buzzes and hums of fluorescent light bulbs, Xerox machines breathing quietly on standby, and the distant wail of a vacuum cleaner come together in sustained chords of drone. Not a punchline in sight amidst these guiet wanderings. Selena Hsu



#### LOUIE VEGA ELEMENTS OF LIFE Vega/US/CD

Never judge an album by its first song. Put off by the faux-orgasmic moaning of "Jungle Fever," I almost didn't listen to the rest of Louie Vega's first solo album. Thankfully, his long history of productions, both on his own and as half of Masters At Work, carried me past that initial misstep and into a disc full of rich, classy music. As early as the second track, a sumptuous collaboration with Blaze, Vega regains his poise, crafting uplifting, vibrant songs that sparkle with detail. Though best known for his deft mastery of 4/4 beats, Vega reveals a passion for all styles as he turns his hand to African, Brazilian and Latin rhythms. Program the player to skip Track 1, and relish an album full of flawless performances and memorable

#### Bubble Core/US/CD

Igloo's name betrays the methods by which it was made-this selftitled record is made up of tracks composed in a state of isolation. of near-hibernation. This is work in its embryonic stage, brought to life in a place of comfort, warmth and shelter and bequiling in its innocent, folky charm. A side project of New York's Adam Pierce (Mice Parade, HiM, Swirlies) and Munich's Doro Tachler (Mice Parade, Alles Wie Gross), Igloo is imbued with the crisp, chiming enchantment you'd come to expect from such a pair, as well as some captivating multicultural croon. Although Igloo lacks any form of explorative percussion, its serenades do have a Nationa Geographic stateliness in their serene sweep. Tony Ware



# N MEET NEXT LIFE

Bleeping is good, and what better album to escort you to the gates of dreamand than the latest from Integrated ervices Analogue Network? Robin aville and Anthony Ryan follow up their 2001 album Lucky Cat with a charmng and intimate collection of dreamy

synth-washed melodies and calming measures that slow the pulse without dropping the ball. Sweet like an instrumental Postal Service, and curvy like early Casino Versus Japan, ISAN's addition of computer savvy to live acoustic guitar, bass and percussion has vielded a project that's pleasingly innocent sounding without being poke-your-eyes-out cute. Melissa Wheeler



#### Sub Rosa/BEL/CD

Along with Christian Marclay, Otomo Yoshihide and Martin Tetreault, UK musician Philip Jeck has been at the forefront of the reinvention of the turntable as instrument rather than mere playback device Armed with an array of vintage record players and prepared vinyl. Jeck creates mesmerizing music through the slow accretion of a variety of simply vet radically altered sounds (choral singing, guitar, spoken word) filtered through a haze of crackles and tics. Host collects four excellent examples of Jeck's work from 2001 and 2002. including a fascinating Quicktime video of a live radio session that sheds some light on the method behind Jeck's highly affective music Susanna Rolle

#### ILIST JACK THE OUTER MARKER

#### TVT/US/CD Just Jack will earn inevitable comparisons to The Streets because

he's British, an erstwhile rapper and a man with a fondness for confessional, at times maudlin, lyrics. Regardless, The Outer Marker is far more like an album Jamiroquai would make. The opening track, "Let's Get Really Honest," is sort of '70s pop funk meets DJ Shadow (minus much actual funkiness), while the cocky strut of "Contradictions" recalls the heyday of acid jazz. All the while, Jack moves between a honky R&B croon and cockney spoken word, both of which are plucky, but not very heartfelt. Some of the beautifully (over)produced beats on this album are enjoyable, but it never lives up to the sum of its influences, from Stereo MCs to Massive Attack to Mr. Skinner himself. The Outer Marker is not a convincing record-it just seems that Jack...doesn't really know jack. Vivian Host



## LUOMO THE PRESENT LOVER Kinetic/US/CD

sophomore effort. Where the tunes on 2000's *Vocalcity* indulged in sustained foreplay, the tracks here strike with a greater sense of urgency, as bulbous bass tones attack the body while platinum hooks burrow their way into your brain. As Australia's Tim Finney so rightly observes on his weblog (at skykicking.tripod.com), Luomo is the don of neuromantici adorning micro music's frame with lustrous melodic refrains and dizzying dubwise accents. As befits his status as the laptop scene's matinee idol, some of his concoctions (like the Prince-esque "What Good") play like the aural equivalent of *haute couture*, reveling in their own sense of excessive refinement. But the best of these tracks ("Tessio" and "Shelter") are astonishingly pristine, spilling out of speakers like diamonds dropping from the skies-radiant and deadly sharp all at once. *Martin Turenne* 



#### KID 606 KILL SOUND BEFORE SOUND KILLS YOU pecac/US/CD

Vith his third LP, Kill Sound..., Miguel Denedro (alias Kid606) goes from Jantop jock and mash-up impresario to bona fide culture recycler, skimming off the best ten seconds (and there usually were only ten seconds) of early '90s

rave anthems and molding them into ragga, breakcore, dancehall and post-noise simulacra. Each tune is a dance music time capsule. For the quickstep thriller "Ecstacy Motherfucker," Depedro ravages rave classics from N.A.S.A., DJ Hype, Yolk and at least 20 others. If you're familiar with the original tracks, listening to Kill Sound... feels like failing an Alzheimer's test; for the rest of the world, it simply makes for top-notch dance-punk entertainment. Heath K. Hignight

#### KILL ME TOMORROW THE GARBAGEMAN AND THE PROSTITUTE Gold Standard Lahs/US/CD

#### MBERS IN MY MIND ALL THE TIME

#### Tigerbeat6/US/CD

Don't let the ridiculous title fool you, The Garbageman and The Prostitute is full of dirty, rough-edged dance punk that blends the squall of Sonic Youth, the spastic beats of the Makeup, and the propulsion of Gang of Four into a careening car ride that leaves no left turn down a dark alley untaken. Numbers propels a straighter course through the dance punk universe, refining their catchy Kraftwerk-meets-X-Ray Spex homage into a 24-minute workout of worky guitars, robotic chants and analog bleeps. In My Mind All The Time's 12 tracks occasionally sound too similar to one another, but mostly Numbers pull off their concept; eschewing computers to create dance music without a glitch. Tyra Bangs



#### AMI KOIVIKKO SAI MIAKKI

#### Shitkatanult/GFR/CD

More a disparate collection of singles and B-sides than an album proper. Sami Koivikko's debut full-length nonetheless offers a vivid snapshot of a young technoist on the rise. Where so many releases on the Shitaktanult label are smeared in grime, this Finnish

aptopper's LP is crisp and clean, chock-full of the sprightly club bangers that have made him the heir apparent to Luomo. Of particular note is Koivikko's keen melodic sensibility: "Hermonik Lost." for example, features an elegiac minor-chord sequence reminiscent of Radiohead's "Pyramid Song," only funkier. Thom Yorke, eat your heart out. Martin Turenne



#### B FROM DARKNESS TO WONDER

would be hard to top Lamb's self-titled debut, but the duo came alarmingly close with last year's What Sound, Sadly, their atest effort suffers mightily from coffee hop/easy-listening syndrome, thanks to he toning down of Andy Barlow's drum and effects machines and the height-

ening of Louise Rhode's dreamy ethereal vocals into schmaltz territory. Some tracks are exceptionally pretty (like the sparse, string-based "Learn") and others perfectly showcase Lamb's quirky, off-kilter character ("Open Up" and "Darkness"), but far too many dabble in a Dido-gone-digital space that sounds too contrived for a band with such a startlingly creative spark. Christine Hsieh

#### MEATY OGRE LEG VS. PISCES

## Galapagos4/US/CD

From the wailing harmonica stains and distorted quitar solo of "Leo Prowls" to the melancholy keyboards of "5:00 A.M. Shadows," Chicago underground producer Meaty Ogre creates slow suspenseful instrumental pieces with a decidedly psychedelic side to them. His debut LP. Leo vs. Pisces, is an ode to astrology that is half instrumental and half lyrical, featuring the full roster of emcees from Mr. Ogre's Galapagos4 label. The vocal tracks range from stunning ("Descending Son" featuring Denizen Kane) to passable ("Long Dirty Word" featuring Rift Napalm), but the beats are always exquisite. Meaty Ogre is equally as comfortable without any wordsmiths-hen left to his own devices, he makes beautiful music with a soulful edge. DJ Anna

#### THE MISTAKEMAN RONG IS WRIGHT CNUT DANCING DANCING

#### Erkrankung Durch Musique/GER/CD

Munich's Erkrankung Durch Musique-which translates as "infected by music"-provides plenty of contagious electro funk on these two releases. Rong is Wright by the Mistakeman (also known as Generation Aldi and Hart of Noise) has so many punk and gothic influences stirring between its sheets that it almost doesn't matter that this album isn't made with guitars. His propulsive, T.Raumschmiere-like techno growl only ceases for the ambient swells of "Born To Drive" and the Dntel-esque weave of "After Youth." Meanwhile, despite being described as the soundtrack to "a strange dream caused by eating cheese before bed," Cnut's five-tracks of loopy electro disco go down smoothly, with some pips 'n' squeaks and foppish vocals thrown in for good measure. Tyra Bangs

#### ISTIAN MORGENSTERN CAROLEA Forte/GER/CD

## AWRENCE THE ABSENCE OF BLIGHT

#### Dial/GFR/CD

The electronic community got a horrible shock last June when 28-year-old Christian Morgenstern died suddenly of a heart attack. Morgenstern was still completing his epic album, and Carolea offers a final nod to his Forte label. Tinged with '80s synths and melancholy, tracks like "Persian Voodoo" show this techno producer's lasting love of electro-non. In the spirit of continuing things, Germany's talented Lawrence offers up a memorable album similarly built from rich, lush textures. Lawrence's house beats punctuate glowing atmospheres that slip from melodic to eerie. He shapes organic compositions that pulse and breathe, offering a stirring reminder that music, like other intangible things, lasts longer than this mortal life. Janet Tzou



#### AR REST BY FAR Studio Distribution/US/CD

Rarely have Americans given British soul nd funk a look. Yanks loved Loose ndz and Soul II Soul, and even dallied ith Level 42 for a minute, but never eally caught on to the mellifluous vibes acid jazz songster Omar. A shame, ince he can hold his own next to any

American soul singer and is often far more adventurous musically With Floetry and Craig David spearheading the current US love affair with Brit neo-soul, perhaps Omar will finally have his day with the re-release of Best By Far, his greatest hits compilation from 2000. June Joseph



## SMID HER ERIEND THE RI HE STAR

#### Skylab Operations/AUS/CD

hasmid is the alter ego of a civil rights awyer and dad from Birmingham, Alahama who was inspired to make this album by Kraftwerk's The Man Machine, old analog gear he bought in high school, and cartoons set in outer space. Its unusual birth aside, Her

Friend the Blue Star is a beautiful little record, full of sweet (but not sugary) electro gurgles, strange textures, and toothsome glitch that reminds of a young Aphex Twin without all the angst. Sealing the deal is a second disc, where Bochum Welt, Tim Koch, Isan and B. Fleischmann perform detailed remix duties on Phasmid's lilting bedtime stories. Vivian Host

#### DI LIBAMON DREAMS TOD BOCK

#### Karanke Kalk/GFR/I P

The shoegaze revival has not hit Hot Topic retail stores, MTV airways and the pages of SLEAZEnation. Until it does, Pluramon's shift from being Can's post-rock stepchild to a shaman conjuring up the sleepwalking ghosts of My Bloody Valentine and Flying Saucer Attack shall delight, Mastermind Marcus Schmickler melts glaciers of lysergic guitar distortion and acoustic porch-jams over bassblown thunk. Guest singer and Twin Peaks chanteuse Julee Cruise sounds like Dolly Parton imitating the MBV girls, but is nonetheless arresting with her nude-nymph-hysterically-giggling-in-the-woods vibe. While *Dreams* lacks the DSP punch of Pluramon's last LP, Render Bandits, it still sounds terribly fresh in such a conservative time for indie rock. Cameron Macdonald

#### HARCO PRONT JIBBERISH Music for Speakers/NETH/CD USTAVO LAMAS BROTES

#### Onitor/GFR/CD A retro-modern Dadaist, Dutchman Harco Pront specializes in

#### a "twice-baked" approach to 20th century Pop. One minute he's doing his best "Howlin' Wolf recording in a toilet," the next he's aping Prince, and the next he's streaming gorgeous, Kompakt-style ambient techno. Even if Beck, Anticon and Captain Beefheart laid the seeds for such madness, it doesn't make Pront's case any less engaging. Gustavo Lamas, meanwhile, picks up where Pront's future-modern moments leave off, minus the whimsy. Brotes' ten flights of fancy drift by on a bed of oxygen with such a lightness of touch as to give kings of the compu-duvet Antonelli Electric and Thomas Fehlmann a run for their techno-

#### PSYCHE ORIGAMI IS ELLIPSIS AMINA GOODSONG THE TRANSCENDENTAL GAME OF ZEN

#### ArcTheFinger/US/CD

money. Alexis Georgopoulos

Atlanta-based ArcTheFinger releases two records representing the ATL's indie rap scene. Utilizing two DJs and an MC, Psyche Origami puts the emphasis on communication. Between the DJs exchanging boom bap like badminton and the noddin' knowledge spit through the mic, Psyche Origami is quick on the cut. Emerging out of (for lack of a better description) the hippie-hop scene, Minamina Goodsong-this time three MCs and a DJ-instill their flow with plenty of lilting, often flute-borne melodies. The overriding mood of is one of upbeat backpack bump, with uplifting lyrics and beats that recall the playful pluck and plunk of the Native Tongues, Tony Ware



Has all that preceded been but a prelude in the world of Squarepusher? One would certainly think so after listening to *Ultravisitor*, Tom Jenkinson's eighth album. On 2001's *Go Plastic*, enkinson finally achieved a balance between his at-times spastic funk bass melodies and breakneck beat programming. *Ultravisitor* reaches further out while simulataneously harkening back to the nebulous experiments with slower jazz tempos on *Selection Sixteen* and *Budakhan Mindphone*. The title track busts out of the breakbeat gate like anything on *Hard* Normal Daddy, but its darkened brow and the quixotic chiming leitmotif floating among the clouds is decidedly fresh. Punctuating the madness are sullen jazz guitar ditties like "I Fulcrum" and "Andrei," which contribute to a sense that *Ultravisitor* is Jenkinson's first stab at a wondrous Squarepusher opera. Heath K. Hignight

#### RAFKWON THE LEX DIAMOND STORY

#### Universal/Motown/US/CD

The fact that Raekwon's The Lex Diamond Story has more thrust than most hip-hop albums I've heard in recent months may actually be a bad portent for the genre, given that The Lex Diamond Story sounds exactly like an album Raekwon could have dropped the album in 1994. After unleashing the classic Enter the Wu-Tang: 36 Chambers, Wu-Tang Clan has never been able to top itself, and Raekwon's rap style, though well-honed, sounds passé -as though he's still stuck at the edge of the bling era. Nonetheless, this album has some solid, rattle-your-trunk singles, like "Missing Watch" (with Ghostface) and "The Hood" (featuring Tiffany Villarreal), Rachel Swan



#### HZEL RAHZEL'S GREATEST KNOCKOUTS Sure Shot/US/CD

# Rahzel is the Eighth Wonder of the

ip-hop universe, a man who grasped ne beatbox blueprint created by Doug . Fresh and Buffy of the Fat Boys and took it to a new level of vocal percussion perfection. Record company politics, perhaps, have conspired to

keep him down (he was once signed to MCA), but like the true champion that he is, he bounces right back up with Greatest Knockouts. If this album of classic boom bip-isms were a mere mix tape, it would be impressive. Since it's basically just one guy doing it all (with a little help from friends like KRS-One, RZA, JS-1, and Slick Rick), it's a mind-boggling accomplishment. Essential listening for true-schoolers. Eric K. Arnold



#### RUSS GARRIEL'S AUDIO SPECTR THE OTHER SIDE PROJECT VOL. 1

# Emoticon/UK/CD/LP

#### The new album from Carl Craig compatriot and Ferox label owner Russ Gabriel certainly does guite a bit to advance broken beat forward, but it would be a shame to slot it into one genre

While the clever boom-kah, boom-kah

of "Flip Down to Break" and the crisp machine funk of the Herbie Hancock-esque "Tisch-Tennis" wouldn't be out of place in Dego or Seiji's DJ box, Gabriel also tinkers with cerebral Detroit electro ("Ode to Ade," "Game, Set, Match"), Plaid-like atmospheric bliss ("Brela," "God is the Moment"), and fusions of all of the above ("Masonette"). Cleverly put together and never short of emotion-whether elated or introspective-Gabriel's achieved another coup for future breaks. Vivian Host

## ARTHUR RUSSELL THE WORLD OF ARTHUR RUSSELL

### Soul Jazz/UK/CD

With Soul Jazz's priceless curatorial eye still firmly set on early '80s downtown New York, they turn to reissuing a true American hero Arthur Russell A classically trained cellist versed in Indian music, Russell moved to New York at the beginning of its great musical renaissance, where he performed with avant gardists David Byrne, Phillip Glass, Rhys Chatham and Allen Ginsberg while also founding classic dance label Sleeping Bag Records. His startling leftfield disco tracks feature here along with some of his more introspective manipulated cello numbers. An essential compilation of experimental dance music, as you'd bankrupt yourself trying to find the originals. Brion Paul



#### Disko B/GER/CD

#### NY ROTHER LIVE IS LIFE IS LOVE

#### Psi 49 Net/GFR/CD

Silicon Soul's full-length Pouti collects tracks from their period in NYC's early-'80s electronic underground, complete with bad French voiceovers and weird twanging noises ("Pardon Moi"). While Pouti is good for you in the same way that the History Channel is reluctantly interesting, Anthony Rother continues to earn his title as the reigning electro maestro. Rother's newest live CD (from a recent set at Brussels' famed Fuse club) is nothing short of electrifying. "Modular Deejay" demonstrates deep, swerv ing rhythms that morph minimal beats into serious grooves, while "Live Is Life" melts warm strings into dark moods recalling Detroit's

#### SOL POWER SOL UPRISING

#### Shaman Work/US/CD

Sol Power obviously ODed on copious amounts of The Coup. The Fugees and Digable Planets before they recorded Sol Uprisingsame level of sophistication. That said, their organic, uplifting sound is a much-needed breath of fresh air considering the sorry state of hip-hop. Sol Uprising gets off to sluggish start, but the due hits their stride with "Now Is The Time." The mad-fresh "They Don't Know" hints that by their sophomore effort, Sol Power could make serious impact. Until then, this is a welcome, though imperfect, antidote to bling-bling gangsta boogie. June Joseph



## stralwerks/US/CD

Vith an illustrious career spanning over ree decades-and spawning such clasics as the edgy 1969 hit "I'd Rather An Old Man's Sweetheart..." and Young Hearts Run Free"-the superlave Ms. Staton has always maintained her position as one of music's legendary

ses. Now a gospel singer, she's been enjoying a revival o late. This collection shuns her later, more chart-friendly work for her Southern-fried soul roots, and each song is a veritable classic in its own right. Her version of Elvis's "In the Ghetto" will make the hair on your neck stand on end. Genius. June Joseph

#### STEREOLAB MARGERINE ECLIPSE Elektra/US/LP

Stereolab does a fantastic job of sounding like themselves-which is a very good thing. But as mom taught us, too much of a good thing can be a bad thing. Happily, this is the only knock on Margerine Eclipse-which contains Stereolab's most memorable songs to date. The most notable part of the band's ninth proper release is the absence of singer/guitarist Mary Hansen, who died tragically last year. Now I know Marge, not Mary, is short for Margaret-which closely resembles the word margerine-but methinks this album is dedicated to her. And what a fine coda it is. Carleton Curtis



#### Stereo Deluxe/GER/CD

Put aside your Thievery Corporation albums and your Mushroom Jazz compilations. The Strike Boys' Playtime is what 21st century lounge music should sound like. Putting aside the pulsing, rave-related breaks of their past, this Bavarian duo crafts an album full of

gently rolling, vibey downtempo. Most of Playtime amplifies reggae nfluences, achieving ever more subtle layers of bass. The roots meets-proto-house swing of "I Am the Witness" and the squelching ragga-tinged synthetics of "Free" and "Everybody" (both featuring MC Blaze) are particularly good, although echoing dub techniques can be heard underneath nearly every track. The album is nicely arranged to roll out into minimal ambient house, but, true to their roots. The Strike Boys can't resist one last rave jab. Playtime ends on a playful note with "No Music," a pulsing pop-lock jam full of computerized voices and scissor-kicking breakbeats. John Dark

#### TALLIYRIC ON MY LIP

#### Full Cycle/UK/CD

Getting super jiggy with it, Tali comes correct with lyrical prose on top of the rolling drum & bass beats that the Full Cycle crew is known for. The high-energy jump-up tracks on this album will grab you by the pants and make you twerk your monkey, whether or not you are a huge fan of breakbeat. Even the slower, chill tunes transport you to a place where the sun always shines and mimosas magically pour themselves down your throat. With a hint of R&B and vocal stylings unlike any of the current crop of overly aggressive MCs, Tali's Lyric on my Lip doesn't lie. These beats got on my lip, on my brain and even in my pants. Julia Chan



#### ON THE RADIO DESPERATE YOUTH BLOOD THIRSTY BABES ouch & Go/US/CD

Vith a skronk and a grating groove, New ork trio TV on the Radio opens its debut full-length, a montage of dense, droning dream-pop doo-wop. It is in the tug f croon against crags, the discordant

rends and forges, that these guys find their thrall, their disparate bop equally desperate and buoyant. TVOR is an idiosyncratic

entity, commanding jagged menacing plod and shimmering soul atmospherics in the spirit of the Bowie/Eno/Berlin trilogy. The sound is a submerged surge. The experience is baptismal. TV on the Radio is the manic street preacher prophesizing contemplative



#### TWERK LIVING VICARIOUSLY THROUGH RIIRNT RREAD

#### Mille Plateaux/GFR/CD HT FROZEN MODULES THE ABDUCTION

#### Orthlorng Musork/US/CD

Both Twerk and Eight Frozen Modules are members of the esteemed California producer/programmer set presenting their fourth full-lengths, but they take their stances on opposite

sides of the laptop. Clicks, cuts and truncated rhythms abound on both albums, but where Twerk soothes, 8FM agitates. Twerk blends field recordings, subtle dub influences and light machine noises into loose, minimal tech-house. 8FM's unraveled techno is textured like sandpaper, and demands attention with layers of skitterish rhythms and futuristic gibberish tweaks. In spite of their differences, both display precise composition and microscopic attention to detail, ensuring fresh revelations each time you listen.



#### OO CHILD BABY MONKEY V2/US/CD

Moby emerged in 1991 with brooding beat-borne anthems such as "Next Is the E." By 1996, after guitar exorcisms and maudlin manifestos, many were likely chanting the mantra "Next is the why?" So mini-Melville utilized Voodoo Child as his hedonist house alter-ego,

and here is his second full-length under the moniker. Inspired by a night out listening to DJs in a Glaswegian tunnel, Baby Monkey is a collection with tunnel vision-throwbacks for throw downs. After all his gospel-tinged, melancholy pop-pump, Moby returns to the straightforward form of four-on-the-floor peppered with synth squiggles, bass pulse and vocal spasms. A welcome return for those left cold by chilled-out, cinematic meditations, Tony Ware



Sounty Killer's former ghostwriter steps out of the shadows and into the lime light with his debut album, named for nis trademark phrase. When you're the hottest dancehall act in Jamaica you get the hottest riddims: Mad Ants, Egyptian, Time Travel and Krazy all get

the Kartel treatment here. Vybz scores big on collaborations "New Millennium" (with Wayne Marshall) and "Kartel and Kardinal" (with Kardinal Offishall), as well as on boom tunes "Sweet To The Belly" and "Sen On." But the standout is "Robbery," in which Kartel jacks Busta Rhymes' hook from "Dangerous." 50 Cent's concept from "How To Rob" and all property from everyone in dancehall, his crew and producers included. Ross Hogg

## WAX POETIC NUBLU SESSIONS

The production on Nublu Sessions is decent and it starts off with a stellar tune-"Tell Me" (featuring Nora Jones)--but Wax Poetic's latest album comes off as a really bad attempt at contemporary world music. "Oriental Wind" is one of the worst offenders-it starts off with a pi pa (a traditional Chinese instrument) before segueing into a shehnai (a traditional Indian instrument) solo with a house beat that sounds like it came straight out of the box-more like the presets. On Nublu Sessions. Wax Poetic strives for mass appeal but just ends up with mediocrity. Julia Chan



# Refill/Hiero Imperium/US/CD

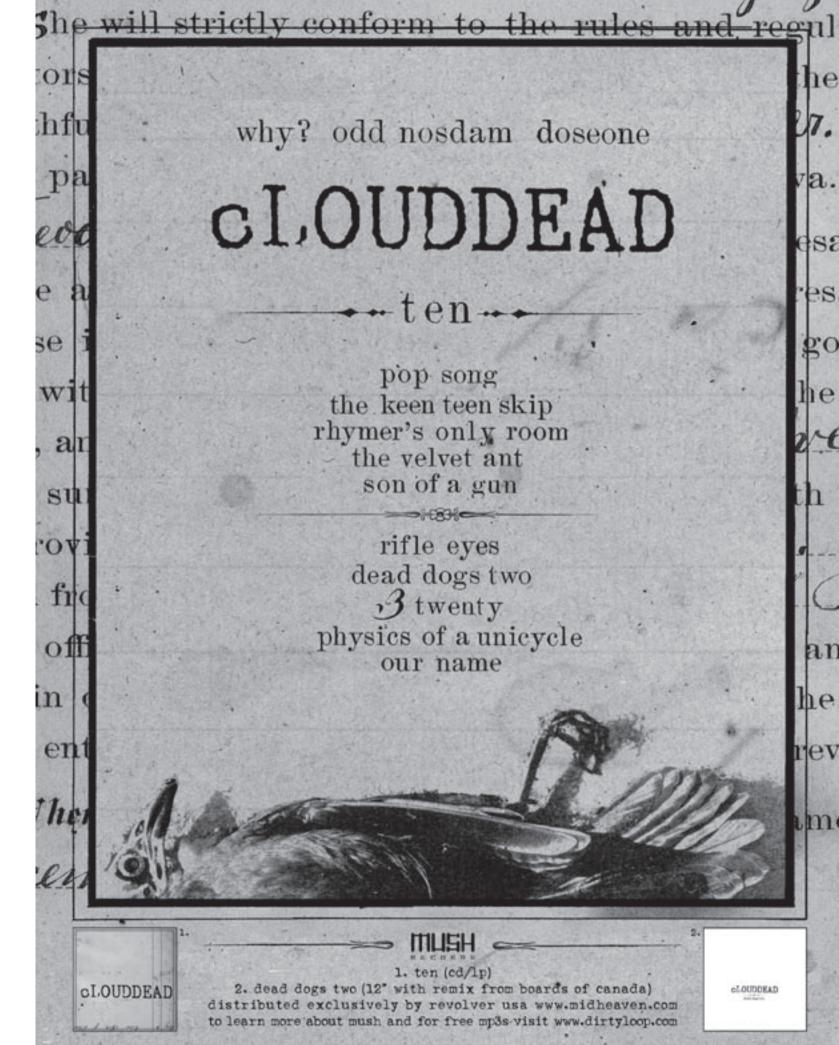
Rappers sound best when it's clear hey feel a strong personal connection o their lyrics. When Paris and Mr. Lif pit agitprop, for instance, you can tell hey really mean it. Other artists aren't tough on politics, and have to stick with subject matter that hits closer to

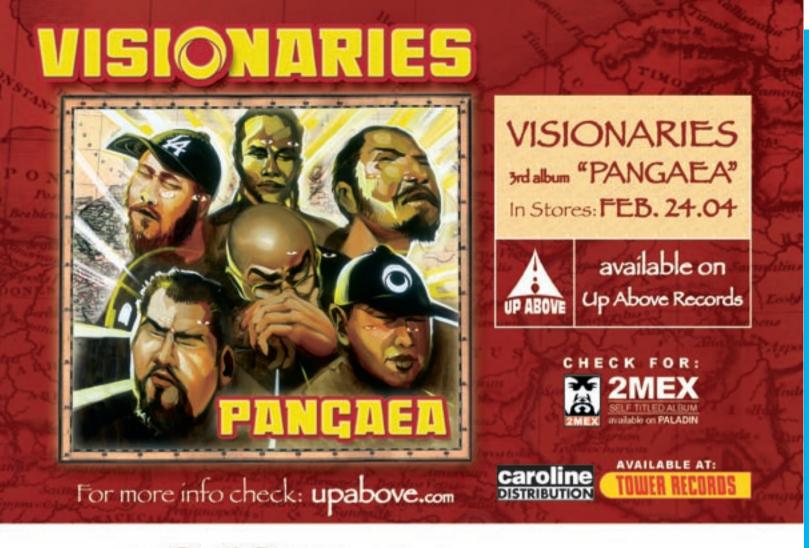
home-like white girls with ass. Z Man sounds most impassioned when he's yapping about said white girls ("Bigots and Bitches," "White Girls With Ass") or getting faded (the rest of the album). Dope or Dogfood is just like its title-you'll either think it's really dope or dogfood. Rachel Swan



#### ZERO 7 WHEN IT FALLS Quango/Palm/US/CD

eleased *Simple Things* in November 2001, they filled an immense void left by 's breakup. Fans of atmospheric bands (think Air and Slowdive), devotees of be as much of a makeout song as "In the Waiting Line" was. But while its billowing orchestral maneuvers and elaborately conceived arrangements may please many, *When It Falls* is not for those who cringe at trilling chimes, rippling Rhodes keyboards or chick flicks. *Tyra Bangs* 







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# REWIND! 3 Ubiquity/US/CD COLOUR SERIES: YELLOW 01 Freerange/UK/CD JAZZ IN THE HOUSE 12: PHIL ASHER Slip 'n' Slide/UK/CD

Though many artists pay lip service to house music's roots in jazz, funk, and soul, it seldom is anything more than a feeble name-check. That's not the case on these three compilations. Whether by direct homage (Rewind! 3's eclectic assortment of cover versions) or oblique allusion (Freerange Records' collection Yellow 01), these collections plumb the musical depths of house music's influences.

Oddly, the longest-running series has the narrowest focus. With a dozen editions in half as many years, Phil Asher's Jazz in the House compilations are compendiums of soulful house music that often leave you wondering just what the difference is between numbers 11 and 12. or even 6. While the latest is unmixed (unlike earlier CD editions). each of the aforementioned volumes features tracks by some of the same artists. This isn't necessarily a bad thing-acts like Blaze and Nathan Haines consistently make great songs, full of rich vocals and conscious nods to house's African roots. For 4/4 aficionados (or really lazy CDJs), JITH 12 provides an excellent survey of recent releases, from the fuzzed-out, contrapuntal bass of Haines' "Squire for Hire" to the subtle, 3am glow of Black Joy's "Untitled," all tied together with a ubiquitous disco beat.

The wide-ranging tempos and styles of Rewind! 3 will undoubtedly appeal to a broader cross-section of listeners. A few tracks here border on sheer novelty, including That Kid Named Miles's rocksteady reworking of Johnny Cash's "Ring of Fire" and Bing Ji Ling's loungey take on AC/DC's "(You Shook Me) All Night Long." Overall, though, this third collection of covers from Ubiquity keeps your attention, even if it's occasionally via shock value alone. The cuts that truly shine are those that take originals and slingshot them into the nu-jazz territory this label does so well. Detroit's John Arnold and Ayro respectively (and respectfully) update Herbie Hancock's "Rough" and "Chameleon"; Arnold kicks the future funk with thick, tech-y sounds, while Ellis turns in an astounding note-for-note re-rub.

It's debatable if the world really needs another compilation series, but the strength of Freerange's catalog merits attention. The artists featured hail from around the world-Gothenburg, Sweden's Stateless serves up two songs, as does Hanna, who calls glamorous Ohio home. In fact, it's Hanna who concisely captures the two sides of Yellow 01, with the sublime swirling keys on "Faceless" riding broken beats while "The Race" keeps it four-on-the-floor funky for early mornings in dimly

Rewind! 3 and Yellow 01 share a resolutely futuristic tone, marked by liquid basslines and squelching synth interjections, along with a solid sense of swing driving the percussion on their 4/4 and broken flavors. JITH 12, meanwhile, chooses to stay within the familiar range of soulful house, and is weaker for not updating its sound with a range of rhythms.



# D SICK HEAD NAH GOOD MIX

nsleeves/UK/CD n this "official dancehall mixtage" m Greensleeves (the home of

ntless dancehall sizzlers), Hot DJ and Massive B label owner by Konders avoids all the oby traps that make most hipp and reggae tapes unlistenable. one are the excessive shout-outs. dodgy 30-second mixes, and schizonic careening between anthems d crappy b-sides. Enter a mad sick and utterly cohesive collection of all the tunes and riddims that have been killing dances over the an's "Genie Dance" through Wayne nder's crossover hit "No Letting to Wayne Marshall's "Check ourself" verse over the cartoon-like

Masterpiece riddim (which conjures vision of flappers line-dancing), never once dropping the energy below maximum. Highlights include Alozade, Hollow Point and Mr. Vegas' modern-day revision of "Under Mi Sensi" over the Nintendo-driven Clappas beat, and Elephant Man's psychotic dance instruction record "Blasé Blasé," which segues between lisped lines like "blathaaay, blathheee-blay" and "runawaaaay when you see your enemaay." Crucial. Vivian Host

#### ADVANCED PUBLIC LISTENING VOL. 1.

#### Laboratory Instinct/GER/CD

In 20 years, when I've learned all the dances I need to know. I'll put on this compilation and start doing some truly next-level maneuvers. You know, some antennae-in-the-air, feet-in-atwist, alien-uprock-type shit. Until then, I'll bump Eight Miles High's psychotic laser-tag drum & bass-meets-free-jazz-piano mash-up "Latein." Then again, Daedelus's bump-in-the-night remix of a certain clap-heavy Busta Rhymes and Sean Paul song is giving me a strange feeling in my trousers. Is that a banana in my pocket, or is Phoenicia's outer space two-step rave up "Conummity College" just happy to see me? Yes sir. this is the future of danceclash, and it's giving me a big fat IDM boner. John Dark

#### SAAG/JPN/CD

Is it a rule that abstract electronic labels must launch with limitededition compilations? Japan's SAAG Records will be excused for following rules, because Anchor and Hiro are filled with top-notch beats and melodies. Some of the featured names, like Logreybeam and Octobus Inc. will be familiar from labels like Merck and Schematic, but plenty of unknowns from the Japan scene round things out. Hiro is more beat-oriented, epitomized by Julian Neto's "Amenimo," which stretches grainy pads over whispers in Japanese and triplet taps, while Anchor favors beatless soundscapes like Toshiaki Ooi's spacious, strange "Energy in Woods." Rob Geary

#### FRANKY BOISSY: BETTER DAYS Metroiazz/US/CD

#### LOVESLAPPED VOL. 3: JAY-

Tired or vital? One could be forgiven for being of two minds about the state of house music after listening to these compilations from San Francisco DJs. Better Days is an unfortunate title for a mix that makes one long for a little more grit in the grind, although it does recover itself at the end with pumping tracks from Pound Boys and John Julius Knight. Jay-J flies the glossy, soulful jet stream and does so with panache, matching his own productions with tracks from Inland Knights, and K. Hand, Full of thick bass lines and skilled programming, Loveslapped Vol. 3 shows that house is definitely alive and kicking. Peter Nicholson

#### Soul Jazz/UK/CD

Before the hustle became Love Boat fodder there was an actual vibrancy to Van McCoy's dance. As evidenced by this new compilation from Soul Jazz, the UK was feeling the Philly soul sound too. Their jazz-funk bands added a Caribbean twist to the Stateside formula with clean picking, bubbling basslines and percussive pockets-this was disco with a Red Stripe. British Hustle not only includes music from FBI and Hi Tension but also Heatwaye (before Rod Temperton wrote half of Off The Wall and Thriller) and Freeze (prior to crafting electro classic "I.O.U."). Equally fitted for a social club or the Paradise Garage. the blueprints of late-'70s and early-'80s dance scene are contained within, even those of proto-house (Imagination's "Burning Up"). Daniel Siwek

#### **COTTAGE INDUSTRIES 3: VESTIBULE & SEPARATE**

#### Neo Ouiia/UK/CD

Metamatics main man Lee Norris is startlingly prolific when it comes to making pixilated Pantone neo-electronica and showcasing like-minded artists on his Cottage Industries compilation series. The third installment meets with mixed results as an array of new names stretch the IDM genre into sappy New Age territory-some adding strummed guitars, some merely existing. Unsurprisingly, the highlights belong to the marquee names: Apparat turns in a stunning contribution with vocalist Marit Post; Greg Davis offers intricate folk guitar, and Maps and Diagrams deliver by-the-book yummy electro noodle. Mmm, very industrious. Brion Paul

#### CRÈME ORGANIZATION PRESENTS YOU BET WE'VE GOT SOMETHING NAL AGAINST YO

#### Global Darkness/NFTH/CD

Talk about the perfect soundtrack for the disenchanted youth of America: this is the stuff all troubled teenagers should listen to. If today's DAF-obsessed, NIN- and Skinny Puppy-referencing hipsters were to do it all over again, they'd be drawn to this double-disc set. A substantial number of tunes collected here are stiff, herky-jerky retro-futuristic electro numbers, from the bald, Miss Kittin-on-testosterone number "Sur Une Cigarette" by It & My Computer, to the twisted synthesized funk of Macho Cat Garage's "Nightbirds" and Rude 66's ghettofied take on Miami bass on Nerves of Steel." Not for everyone, but that's part of the appeal,

#### CERTIFIED DOPE VOL. 4: BARYLON'S BURNING

#### WordSound/US/CD

Proving that there is more to new dub than the "illbient" tag, the Crooklyn Dub Consortium is back with another edition of Certified Dope, and this kouchie is so skank you'll pass-out before passing on de left. They offer a variety of styles, finding the perfect balance between classic and modern sounding plates. From Bill Laswell, who recedes deep into the genre's past (with Augustus Pablo-esque melodica and Sly Dunbar on the kit), to Spectre's frighteningly apocalyptic "Al Quaida," this dub sack is grade A. Daniel Siwek



Def Jux/US/CD Other than the fact that some dude that sounds like El-P comes on every minute in every song to remind me that I'm listening to a Def Jux promo, Def Jux 3 is an enjoyable, bracing peep into the future of indie rap's most potent label. Of course, if you buy the disc, you

won't have to sweat the interruptive reminder, but you will get 13 tracks of disjointed beats, rhymes that would make Shakespeare turn green and more lyrical smackdowns than Run-DMC's pre-God-squadding salad days, RJD2, as usual, makes the biggest impression with the pristine, poignant "Clean Living," but El-P delivers some patented kicks to the grill on the harrowing "Oxycontin Part 2" and "Weathermen Radio." Scott Thill

#### HN DOE: POPULAR FALLACIES (TRUE LIES)

#### Audible Objects/US/CD

Big ups, Cincy! Fuck Ken Griffey, Jr.: John Doe has much better wrists and actually comes through in the clutch. Using popularthat is, crappy-cinema and the finest hip-hop joints in history as his points of departure, DJ John Doe has crafted a bomb-track mixtape better than more than half of 2003's musical output. Song titles run the gamut from "Back to the Future" to "A Beautiful Mind" and KRS-One Slick Rick Chuck D. Guru Tribe and countless more leak into the seamless mix, as do Tom Cruise, Jack Nicholson and other cheeseballs of the silver screen. Like his pals in The X-ecutioners. Doe has a musical hible for a brain and a sure-fire sense of humor, and both are on brilliant parade in Popular Fallacies, Grab this shit and spin it. Now. Scott Thill

#### Larne Music/US/12

This new compilation from Large Music bills itself as containing "dark and dubby electric grooves." If this is what passes for dark in the house music world, then throw on that Skinny Puppy record, and let's jet. There's scarcely a minor chord melody or scary sound among these ten tracks. On the plus side, there is some experimenting with 4/4's boundaries here, which can only be a good thing. Highlights of Evolution... include the squelching Chicago-style funk of Peter Hecher's "Funkdafied," the drummy and tribal "Paradise" by Roy Davis Jr., and "Hold On To You." Jav-J and Andrew Macari's bizarre combination of '80s, disco and gospel-house influences, Personally, I find house a little hard to take when it's unmixed, but if you're a conoisseur, you'll love these 60 minutes of raw, unadulterated

#### RIC 14: STACEY PULLEN

#### Fabric/UK/CD

Stacey Pullen is the funkiest of the Detroit veterans, in part because he strays far outside the confines of pure techno. In fact, Fabric 14 is primarily a house thing, dabbling in tribal patterns disco loops and crispy tech flavors. Pullen covers all the bases with panache, moving from Pure Science's shimmering, filter laden "Get It Back" to Moodyman's nostalgic '70s rub "Music People" and the guitar-happy noodle of Solid Groove's "Flookin"." But Pullen doesn't ever reach a peak here, spending more time in the flanged-out upper registers than on the classic Midwestern dancefloor thump he's known for. Tyra Bangs

#### Glasgow Underground/SCOT/CD

Label owner Kevin McKav selects and mixes the best of the past and present of his esteemed deep house label Glasgow Underground on this two-disc set. The "Classics" disc shows just how quickly electronic music moves, in that tracks released between 1995 and 2000 are already considered ancient history. Happily, you'll find none of the bombastic cheese often associated with UK house here, just a series of clever riffs on 4/4, from the sinister acid thrust of Cassio's "Baby Love" to the organic downtempo swell of Love Rec and Karmen Ellis' "The Scene" The second CD ("The New Shit") forges a glimmering future from the shards of the past, plumbing the depths of early-'80s dance music for 808 handclaps, jackin' Chicago rhythms and robotic vocals. No electrotrash here, just fine future house with a generous helping of the LA Dream Team's "Rockberry Jam." Vivian Host

#### Raw Fusion/SWE/CD

Few labels have burst onto the scene with the immediate impact of Stockholm's Raw Fusion. This boundary-less imprint manages gains new admirers with every release, as they collide dangerous future flavors with tradition-steeped musicality. On "Late Night Junction," hometown player Cyclo puts contorted brass, jiving keys and unflinching percussion into a blender, "Tombo In 7/4" by A Bossa Eletrica fits an instantly recognizable samba vocal snugly over tapping percussion, a concerned guitar and a cosmic flute. Inside Scandinavia is guaranteed to wake up the world to the exciting music making its way from Scandinavia's icy shores. Jon Freer

#### AYO & BUSHWACKAL ALL NIGHT LONG

#### End Recordings/UK/CD

Neither making their UK super-club The End a huge success for the clubgoing masses nor flaunting their production talents have diminished Matthew "Bushwacka!" Benjamin and Layo Paskin's cool factor one bit. Despite being certifiable "old-timers" in the UK club scene, the duo's new double-CD mix shows the kind of daring that so often fades in established DJs. Newcleus' "Jam On It" nestles comfortably against hidden gems, including Higashida Tomohiro's "Special Place," and much-loved tracks like The Detroit Experiment's "Think Twice." Fans should forgive the boys the boring title and check their blends, which are startlingly good as ever, Janet Tzou

#### MF DOOM PRESENTS SPECIAL HERBS VOL. 4 Shaman Work/US/CD

#### THE PROF PRESENTS C

#### Nature Sounds/US/CD

Like Kool Keith, MF Doom is known for swapping aliases, personae, and styles. We lose that idiosyncrasy in Special Herbs, Vol.4. Although Doom's music is intricate enough that he can pull off an instrumental album, these tracks seem flatter than their counterparts on the King Geedorah and KMD albums, bereft as they are of MF Doom's sad, sandpapery voice. The Prof.'s Convexed-which includes the noir-ish MF Doom track "Bells of Doom"-sounds more rickety than the lustrous Special Herbs, and the musical quality varies a lot more. However, given the verbal skills of MCs like Masta Killa and Vordul (Cannibal Ox), Convexed is sometimes a more interesting album, Rachel Swan

#### Suss'd/UK/CD SON- MOVE YOUR BODY

#### IInisex/IIK/CD

My Salsoul is a personal and humble ode to the label compiled by re-edit king Danny Krivit, while Move Your Body is a historical look at Chicago's musical past that egotistically paints Marshall Jefferson as the main man. Both the Salsoul label and Chicago's house scene heavily influenced the subsequent development of dance music, making these two compilations important history lessons. The highlights of Krivit's Salsoul adventure include his reedit of the Shep Pettibone version of Surface's besotted "Falling In Love" and the Salsoul Orchestra's exhilarating "212 North 12th." Windy City delights include Isaac Hayes's application "I Can't Turn Around" and Larry Heard's spellbinding "Can U Feel It." Jon Freer

#### NO MORE PRISONS 2

#### Rantivism/IIS/CD

From the West Coast (The Coun Zion I Pyro & Self Scientific) to the East Coast (Saigon, Krumbsnatcha, Dead Prez) to the Dirty South (Crooked Lettaz), NMP2 has Amerikkka covered, offering up often-scathing sociopolitical commentary on our ill society mixed in with artists' personal views. The big surprise here is not that there are so many hip-hop artists with something to say, but the quality of the songs; dope production, wicked lyrics and catchy hooks abound. The welcome return of legendary MCs Lil' Dap, Ed OG, and Chubb Rock (together with newcomer Ike Eyes) makes "Rich Get Rich" a must-hear even if you're completely apolitical And Akbar's "Battle Cry" makes yet another strong case for him as one of the most slept-on MCs of our time. Speaking of which, dozing on this tight comp is not something you want to do, unless you think freedom, justice and civil liberties are overrated. Eric K Arnold

# Onitor/GER/CD



One thing hippies and punks had in mmon was an oppositional impulse. While fans of electronic music are unabashed in their dismissal of pop culture, the movement (large though it may be) has few political aims. In this respect, computer music nerds resem-

ble neither hippies nor punks, but the jazz-fixated hep cats of the 1950s. As with jazzbos, many IDM enthusiasts derive satisfaction not from rebelliousness but from the sense of being included in a rarefied group of aesthetes perched safely above the mainstream morass. Featuring stellar contributions from AGF, Terre Thaemlitz and others, Politronics argues that contemporary electronicists are more politically-engaged than ever before, a case made all the more emphatic by accompanying essays from the likes of Matthew Herbert, Thomas Venker and XLR8R's own Philip Sherburne. Fighting the power, one click at a time. Martin Turenne

# Scheinselbstandig/GER/CD

# Kompakt/GER/CD I BIST DIE STADT: UNTER DEM PFLASTER

On Pon Ambient 2004 Kompakt's beatless tracks slowly sail, undisturbed and indestructible, along a trail of thick, dewy glisten. Check Triola's "Ral," an

aguamarine hymn that's all refracting sun on water, and the guitar plucks that leap in and out of Donnacha Costellos' "To Thee This Night." Du Bist die Stadt, part of a series showcasing Cologne artists, gathers up 13 kicky minimal techno tracks. Lol-Lee's "Up On" is a summertime disco anthem sung by a baby-voiced robot diva and both Thomas Brinkmann's "Walk With Me" and Polarov's "A Separate Way" sulk in that New Romantic way. Selena Hsu

#### I n/IIK/CD

Red Snapper created the perfect balance between vin and vang. with masculine bass roiling relentlessly underneath a veritable pirouette of sophisticated electronic wizardry. Lo Recordings has done the nearly impossible in compiling Redone, the definitive remix album for a frustratingly difficult-to-define band. Susuma Yokota creates an elegiac homage to "Mountains and Valleys." while the sprightly "Heavy Petting" exhibits a bit more irreverence, courtesy of David Ayer's new side project, The Creation. There's a decidedly blissful approach to "Dnipro" by Europa 51, a wide-ranging side project featuring members of the High Llamas and the late Mary Hansen. The three disparate mixes from the Snappers themselves are telling of their multiple personalities-one is a gothic lament, one is brazenly kitschy, and one is unabashedly aggressive. Margaret Murray

# Madhouse-VP/US/12

#### reensleeves/IIK/12

Fiesta is sort of a misnomer-this Dave Kelly-produced rhythm may contain a nulticultural stew of influences, but nost of them sound Caribbean or African, rather than Mexican. Off-kil-

ter synths that sound like steel guitars, muted handclaps like someone clacking two Lincoln Logs together, and uplifting marimba sounds populate this backing track, over which Beenie

Man, Baby Cham, and Elephant Man fail to sound roughneck. Newcomers Akon and Ms. Thing-who I imagine as a sweeter, younger Lil' Kim-steal the show. Where Fiesta offers 10 tracks, Trifecta's got a staggering 21 numbers from usual suspects like Sizzla, Ward 21 and T.O.K. This Wild West rhythm-with drums rolling out like rattlesnakes and galloping like wild stallions-is aced by the ladies, as Lady Saw's delivers nasty chat on "Pretty Pussy" countered by Timberly's fierce, Fendi-lovin' 'Independent Gyal" Tyra Bangs

#### Putumavo/US/CD

Ever eaten at a Lebanese, Korean or Indian restaurant? Then you know that pop tends to sound corny and too slick for its own good, no matter what language it's sung in. Unfortunately, pop figures too prominently on the Sahara Lounge compilation. Despite its aim of blending Middle Fastern rhythms with electronic beats, most of the time the songs would be better suited for the chopping block than the cutting edge. There are some nice moments-particularly Mohammed Mounir's staccato Egyptian vox on "Hanina" and the loopy swing of "Dub4Me," performed by Lebanese duo Soap Kills. Still, it says something that the best song on Sahara Lounge, "Cleopatra in New York," is by Manhattan's Nickodemus and Carol C. Perhans traditional Arab musicians sound better on their own; or in the hands of Western sampler gurus, rather than their own pop producers. John Dark

#### STEREO PICTURES VOL. 3: DJ VADIM

#### Jazz Fudne/IIK/CD

Russian expatriate DJ Vadim has made quite a name for himself carving out sludgy, slo-mo beatscapes-imagine your Walkman playing Tribe on low batteries. And his attention to life's minutiae (creaking doors, honking horns) has made for some unorthodox, if not mesmerizina, listenina experiences. On Stereo Pictures Vol. 3. a 23-song comp co-presented by France's MK2 cinema group. /adim pays homage to his forebears and his followers. Solo Los Solo, Mr. Scruff, DJ Shadow and Gotan Project all make appearances (but where's DI Krush?) while new Vadim interludes finish putting that ass to sleep. Those with A.D.D. or fans of M.O.P. need not apply. Carleton Curtis

#### Good Looking/UK/CD

Studio X-2 is a gathering of the newest producers on LTJ Bukem's fabled Looking Good imprint. Yet it could easily be a gathering of old producers, because the airy, synthetic jazz & bass served up here hasn't changed much since Bukem pioneered the style in the mid-'90s. At best, these songs display clever tinkering with breakbeats (Alex DB's "Aurora Boreal," "Track 9"); at worst, this is smooth jazz hour at the local public library (Nu Moon's "Too Right" and Track 7). Thankfully, there's something that saves Studio X-2: six remixes at the end-from the likes of established producers Carlito, Danny C, and John B-add much-needed dancefloor weight by way of chunkier breaks and syrupy sub-bass. John Dark

#### Melodic/IIK/CD

Though located in Manchester's bustling city center, the Melodic label takes many of its emotional/sonic/aesthetic cues from the city's more bucolic outskirts and outlying commuter towns. and the gently blossoming label has been widely aligned with the "folk-

tronica" scene. Suprising then, that Tracks For Horses-Melodic's 20th release-is a widely disparate collection that jumps from oldskool hip-hop to '70s style jazz/folk to quirky cut 'n' paste paeans to TV game shows soundtracks to sedentary electronica. Many of the compilation's best tracks present new strains of music with the original blueprint of folk-plus-electronic joyfully infected by disco and funk. There's much pleasure to be taken from these intriguing new mutations. David Hemingway

## WAR (IF IT FEELS GOOD, DO IT!)

#### Hin-Hon Slam/US/CD

Gone are the '60s activists with their guitars and tambourines: enter the sampler and the turntable. Hip-Hop Slam's Billy Jam produced War (with additional production by DJ Pone and Dawgisht) as an homage to Steinski's pioneering cut-and-paste production, albeit with a political bent. Almost every artist on this often dark, but also funny, funky and compelling, compilation puts a lovingly leftist twist on various Dubya speeches, resulting in gems like, "Tonight, I have a message for the people of Irag: Go home and die." Pone serves up appropriately bombastic remixes of Public Enemy and Mr. Lif, while Tino Corp, Azeem, Aya De Leon, Shingo2, the 13-year-old AckRightKids (ARK) and Steinski himself offer their own political commentaries. Ross Hoga

#### Toast and Jam/US/CD

Seattle's irreverent Toast and Jam came up with the mandate for this compilation, asking artists to reinvent songs they couldn't stand as tracks they actually liked. Certain people will prefer Britney Spears' sugar-coated "Baby One More Time" and Madonna's saucy "Vogue" to the eardrum cut 'n' paste ping-pong of Edward Coli's "Object [...] Object." Some may say classic rock standard "House of the Rising Son" is maligned by the five-minute feedback drone Jansky Noise presents as a remix. But there's amusement to be had listening to the Emanon's sutured techno polka version of the Happy Days theme and the Square Root of Evil's drum 'n' crash send-up of Nelly's "Hot in Herre." We Bore 2 is many things-snide, loveable, at times ear-shattering-but it's never boring. John Dark



# RENEGADES OF FUNK VOL. 2 DSPITAL MIX 3: MIXED BY NU:TONE lospital/UK/CD

he second installment in the Renegades of Funk series, mixed by German duo Tronik 100, opens with punchy breakbeats, gutsy vocals and Latin-style melodies-for the first half an hour, you're swept up in a funky d&b mix that bursts with energy and variety. Maintaining this dynamism over 20 tracks proves to be a challenge these DJ/producers can't quite master. Despite the duo's excellent technical skills, many of the tracks on Vol. 2 don't live up to either the standards of danceability and musicality that Renegade has set in the past. Perhaps Tronik 100 could take a lesson from Hospital's Nu:Tone, who opens with a less explosive number, a remix of Lenny Fontana's classic "Spread Love," but in doing so cements a funky, soul-driven tone that he rides through the rest of the mix. Tracks like High Contrast's "Basement Dub" and Cyantific's 'Quiet Star" may become faster and harder with each successive minute, but Nu:Tone refuses to regress into worn-out aggression, keeping true to the mix's initial mood until the very last second. Jenn Marston



# HOUSE GUEST REVIEWS:

Daniel Paul have kept the oogie intact as Berlin redelops its house scene. Paul s Slope, releasing singles like 01's Detroit-tinged "Para Los Pinchas" and '02's Prince-like Basscheck," as well as the lbum M on Sonar Kollektiv, But w Berlin tunes made a splash ke Meitz's remix of Paul's ubby, '80s-boogie stomper Outta Space," which appeared n more than nine compilabel, which he's run since 1995 with DI 7KY has made waves ith releases by the likes of

Compass, Honesty and Todd Bodine, along with Paul's recent jam "Love is in the House." Below, the man reveals what love is on his decks, Ron Nachmann

#### DOWNTOWN BROOKLYN INC. 10 JAY STREET Ibadan/US/12

I see fast clouds on a sunny day when I listen to this record. It takes you on a journey from Detroit to Rio. Tight, shakin' beats with sparkling harmonies. The 610 Dub by the Spence Filipson Experience first reminded me of Eric Kuppers' "Planet K," but this one is more tech-y and boogie-ish. The whole record is perfect for open-air festivals. DP

#### HENRICK SCHWARZ CHICAGO Mood Music/GER/12

First, the sweeping two-minute intro hypnotizes you. Then, a simple house groove hits you from the back and won't let you go, and you're already into the groove of Henrick's version of "Chicago," "Feel Da Vibe" on the flipside is a nice, bizarre track with a lot of room for listening sessions at home. "Sunday" has a hip-hop-like downtempo groove. Good tool. Check out Henrick's own label, sundaymusic. DP

#### SECRET CODE Moton/UK/12

I don't know who did this, but it sounds fresh to me. An Afro feeling runs through the whole record, with syncopated harmonies and groovy disco house beats. It sounds like it was recorded by a live band. I like it a lot. The other side is exactly the same, which is a good idea in case one side gets damaged...and who needs b-side mixes? Classic. DP

## **BLAK BEAT NIKS THE SUN WILL SHINE**

#### Slin 'n' Slide/UK/12

Chicago's David Blak comes around with another smoker, as his crooning adds a slightly Afrobeat aspect to this rousing 11-minute r&b/disco opus. On the flip, Simon Grey gives it a Knee Deepstyle Latin touch that supports Blak's vocals rather than overwhelming them. Ron Nachmann

#### LAND SHARK DANGEROUS

#### Coco Machete/US/12

Lance DeSardi continues his weird-ass Land Shark series with this spare bit of tweakery. Screeching beeps, burbling synth chants, the occasional neo-wave melody line and a relentless rhythm all carry DeSardi's mumbling vocals. or ride on their own for the preferable dubs and instrumentals. A cool departure from the genre's usual blah-ness. Robert "Boogie" Sheftell

#### FDDIE MATOS FUNK FOOD FP Odds & Ends/US/12

New Yorker Matos revels in the irresistibly artificial-sounding power of sample editing on these three solid tracks. From the deep and functional disco grooves of "Carry On" to the familiar-butobscured sliced-up soul vocal bits on "Dancin' Tonight" and "Talkin' Bout Love," Matos has got the science down. Ron Nachmann

#### BEN NEVILE + LOSOUL PETID EP Telegraph/FRA/12

#### IN WALKER TURN@ROUND EP Fair Park/IIS/12

Could North America start to sprout as a minimal house hot-zone? Canada's Ben Nevile tosses his "Petid"-all softly padded percussion, spitting hi-hats, translucent melody lines and chiming chords-to Köln's Peter Kremeier, who, in his Losoul guise, warms it up, strips it down and turbos it for the dancefloor. Head to Bush land and you find Dallas man John Walker offering up four tracks of thumpy kick, snappy percussion

and supple basslines, with highlights like the vibraphone chords of "Ease" and the syncopated rhythms of "Giggle," Swingin'. Ron Nachmann

#### SOLII MUSIC FEAT, KAI MARTIN

#### CAN'T HELP MYSELF Solu Music/US/12

Howie Caspe and Dano Nathanson once again bring us a shot of well-crafted and intriguing chilled house. With loads of non-obtrusive synth effects dancing amongst the cozy chords and Kai Martin's subdued vocals, "Can't Help Myself" is a lovely, soulful set-builder and a nice addition to SM's vocal-heavy discography. Walker Lindh

#### SOUL DHAMMA FEAT DONNI IF WE COLL D FLY ROLAND CLARKE PRESENTS URBAN SOUL

# IF I WAS A DJ

#### King Street Sounds/US/12

New York's King Street label might get iffy with their titles, but not with their vision of accessible deep/soul house. Philly team Soul Dhamma's "If We Could Fly" buoys vocalist Donni's brassy presence with a breakbeat approach that Dennis Ferrer takes back to conventional house territory, embellishing it with unnecessary guitar riffs and not enough of those tasty horn bits. Meanwhile, Roland Clarke gets his hilarious, acidtinged jive anthem ("Even the KKK would dance to my sound") mixed to electro-ish sparseness by Blackwatch and outlandish brappiness by Lil' Steven. No ands or buts about it. Ron Nachmann

#### CHARLES SPENCER THE BOARD MEETING EP Loveslan!/IIS/12

San Francisco's Spencer gets a move on for another jammy on his Loveslap! imprint. The aside's "Board Meeting?" features melting synth washes and a popping bassline over a snare- and conga-heavy rhythm, while the flip's surprising "Dan the Man" lavs an '80s synth bassline, faux-trumpet riffs and little backward bits over a fill-heavy beat. Man's got skills. Robert "Boogie" Sheftell

# **REVIEWS: PAUL**



nitially emerging in 1985 as a hip-hop and soul DJ, UK man Paul Langley soon earned 988 DMC Mixing ampionships. After a ost event in the UK 1993, Langley develpped a healthy taste for ard-hitting techno. In 1997, he hooked up with

DJ Rush and performed at Berlin's Love Parade, leaving a global impression. Since then, Langley's released on such labels as High Octane, 4 X 4, Pro-Jex and countless others, and currently runs his Jack-Star imprint, which focuses on jacked-out, Chicago-style electronic funk. PRAXIS

#### DJ BAM BAM HERE IT COMES (FEAT. ALEX PEACE) Bass Heavy Music/US/12

This is the first release from Chicago's King of Jackin' on his own label. "Here It Comes" can only be described as an explosion of marching Chicago bass funk whipped up to a frenzy with Alex's cool vocals. Alex also gets to bump the remix to my delight. PL

#### SWITCHBLADE 001 U-Funk/UK/10

New label from the guys at 4 X 4, this time releasing on 10" vinyl. Switchblade comes full pelt after a cool Goodfellows gangster sample that hits you right between the eyes. I played this at a club in Germany and some guy came up to me after the track and just shook his head saying, "You are crazy!" PL

#### SVEN WITTEKIND & ROBERT NATUS BASTARDS ON THE MOVE EP Combat Skill/GER/12

Two of Germany's leading hard techno producers hook up for a brutal slice of European mayhem. The title track holds no punches as the pair thrusts compressed drums through the roof, leaving just enough room for the spooky Halloween-style chimes to bring you back down. PL

#### THE ADVENT & WLA GARCIA EDITION 2 Ekho-Port/PORT/12

Continuing what the first title introduced, this EP offers a slightly different impression of what club techno can accomplish. With unmatched charisma and style, The Advent sketches his studio full of groove-spliced fills, high-pass filter sweeps and big reverse synth breaks. Flip for even more funk PRAXIS

#### **DDK VS. MARCES TAPREPEATOR**

#### Collapse/GER/12

With its assortment of compressed kicks and dark ambiance, "Taperepeator" progresses to the first break and explodes with dirty mayhem as the grinding lead bounces slowly between the speakers. Total sound evolution throughout; from the patterns to the patches and into the effect parameters, your trip is guaranteed. PRAXIS

#### **DJ EMERSON THE JOINT** Kiddaz.FM/GER/12

From the label that just won't quit comes a Latininfused beast that reflects current tribal trends. Dubby vocal delays cut through the wobbly bass, leaving room for syncopated stabs to increasingly shuttle the dancefloor helm. This one's on limited release, so catch yours quick, PRAXIS

# GLASS DOMAIN GLASS DOMAIN EP

#### Clone/NETH/12

Dutch label Clone comes forth with this reissue from ultra-obscure Euro Heinrich Muller, but to what end? To show that 1991 was one of those naïve times when knob-twiddlers shot for dance hits rather than true self-expression? Thankfully, "Shatter Proof"'s relentless lasering melody over a simple one-two beat and "Fairy"'s warped gaylectro make up for both "Hiccough"'s truly stupid electro and "Interlock"'s tripe-wave stylings. So-so. Ron Nachmann

# NOAH PRED SOLITARY LIFE EP

## Intrinsic Design/CAN/12

Hailing from Montreal, Noah Pred's latest addition is a tribal tech-house wonder. On the a-side you have the hard yet pretty "One Track Mind," a deep, moody track with chunky bass, soft pads and filtered highs. On the flipside, you have two

deliciously deep, driving tracks with solid chords and heavy basslines. Anyone can tell Pred is blazing a new trail for tech-house lovers far and wide. A must-listen Forest Green

# PUENTE LATINO SOLOUNO

#### Random Dynamics/GER/12

New York meets Stockholm as Cari Lekebusch teams with Alexi Delano for some serious grooves. After a heady deep house swing that gets things started, a crunchy low-end and a brilliant upper end define a big mix with a spacious stereo image. Cascading synths and three-sixteenth delay turn this vinvl into a slab of late-night enchantment. PRAXIS

#### ANTHONY ROTHER BAD TO THE BONE Datanunk/GFR/12

#### Electro bad bwoy Rother brings the final word to

the '80s electro/wave revival with the launch of his Datapunk label. No dorky twinkly metrosexual melody lines here, as the title track brings a growly ghetto tech bassline under Rother's chanting robo-vox. Flip for the tuff 'n' vulnerable "Back Home," sounding like early-'80s UK industrial à la Cabaret Voltaire Masterful Ron Nachmann

#### THE HOFFMAN EXPERIENCE EP

Sina Solouk and Jacob Heinrich reach back to a late-'80s vibe to drum up these bits of pounding machine thump, "Dirty Little Thing" offers up edgy acid nostalgia with its charging chords and ominous melody line, while the flip's "12 Inches of My Mind" goes for some brighter, yet still understated and almost dubby, medium-hard tech. Ron Nachmann

#### TIM XAVIER & WALE TAIWO THEATER OF SOUND PV/GFR/12

On this 66th PV release, Pascal Feos introduces a few new affiliates to the ever-evolving roster. Chicago-based Xavier submits a shimmery shuffled-up mix of a deeply effected plucked synth, backed with time-synced reverse reverb throughout the mix. The Feos cut on the flip houses the unedited lead with a steadier percussive drive. PRAXIS







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# **HIP-HOP GUEST REVIEWS: THE HERBALISER**

If you don't know The Herbaliser, you don't know jack. Since the early '90s, producers Ollie Teeba and Jake Wherry have been the resident hip-hop specialists in the Ninja Tune camp. Over ten years, four albums and a gang of 12s, these guys have helped map out the UK's current surging hip-hop scene. They've also turned The Herbaliser into a live act, with Wherry on bass and Teeba on decks supported by horns, live drums and percussion. The pair is currently working on their fifth album for release later in '04, which will feature collabs with the likes of Jean Grae, Roots Manuva and Wildflower. For now, you should sip some Herbal Blend, the duo's diversely funky Solid Steel Mix on Ninja, and take their recommendations below to heart. Ron Nachmann

#### CAPPO GRAND FINALE Zebra Traffic/UK/12

Cappo is here with his most recent excursion. "Grand Finale" is pretty decent, but the best is the b-side's crazy funked-up version of previous single "Learn to Be Strong" courtesy of Quantic Soul Orchestra. Quantic's Will Holland dispenses

with the original's Ben E King vocal sample and replaces it with QSO's own vocalist Alice Russell. It has an upper tempo feel that's stoopid funky, and a slammin' drum break at the end. Get two copies, baby, OT

#### LIKWIT JUNKIES KEEP DOIN' IT ABB/US/12

Brand new collabo comin' from Likwit crew's Defari and Dilated Peoples' DJ Babu, Babs surpasses himself this time with two ridiculously funky beats. Both this and the flip's "Scans" are great, but the a-side takes it for me with some crazy '60s soul sample with little vocal bits going on behind Defari's liquid flow. FFFFRRRREEESHHHHHHH!! *OT* 

#### TAZ ONLY GOD CAN JUDGE ME white/UK/12

Taz co-produced the last Dizzee Rascal track, which I must admit I haven't got round to hearing. This solo effort comes out on Def Jam UK, and if you've been feeling the UK/Jamaican-tinged styles of artists like Roots Manuva, then you'll like this. This track has well-delivered, meaningful lyrics straight from the streets of south London, and a nice, simple, ploddy, head-noddy beat. JW

# Hiero Imperium/US/12

Guru said, "It's mostly the voice," and that's definitely the case with Encore. Give him a decent heat and I'd listen to him read weather reports. Luckily, his rhymes are on point and his beats (provided here by next big thing Jake One) are bangers. On "Zigga Zigga," Encore blesses the '70s horn samples and crisp snares with his trademark vocal delivery, while the flip's "Essentially Yours" sees him outline his master

plan over a stuttering beat laced with keys.

#### Project Blowed/US/12

Ross Hogg

Many underground MCs stay beneath the surface due to club/radio-unfriendly beats and a lack of lyrical skills. Neither is the case on "Give It Here," the first single from Good Brothers, a compilation of Project Blowed affiliates. Underground vets Ahmad, Aceyalone and Pep Love bring more West Coast heat than the Ventura wildfires over a tribal Neptunes-esque beat. The flip's "Come Unity" features Aceyalone

and Riddlore rhyming over a Middle Eastern riddim augmented by Jah Orah's patois patter.

# THE GROUND ALL WE GOT

#### Inquisitive/US/12

On "All We Got," all you get is a hot-ass beat by Waajeed. The slumpy track would be better complemented by rough rhymes, but that's not The Ground's forte. For that, you have to check the flipside's "Trust Issues," produced by UB. This is a much more successful endeavor, with Jayem and JC Inquisitive spitting heartfelt lyrics to their paramours over an introspective and insistent beat that would sound equally at home under r&b vocals. Ross Hogg MAIN FLOW SHE LIKES ME

## Brick-Wanna Battle/US/12

Ah, the vulnerability of a head with new love in his sights. As Cincinnati vet Main Flow contemplates why she's callin' so much, he faces hater Elone's doubts ("Man she likes you not/she like you for ya top spot...she like you for your paper, dawg") over both Croatian studio man Nace's sinewy beat and a richer thump courtesy of Beyonder. The flipside's "The Wire" takes it back to street realness with some hot cuts, cuz, well, ya gotta stay hard, don'tcha? Ron Nachmann

#### RGANIC THOUGHTS BE ALRIGHT Blaze the World/US/12

If you're not familiar with this group, their guest list should help: Prince Poetry guests on the a-side, Peril-L is on the flip, and for the studio heads, one side was engineered by CJ "The Great" Moore, And while Prince Po steals the show, it ain't all about the guests. The a-side features a lush (and lengthy) Spanish-flavored guitar sample over which each MC flexes taut, multisyllabic rhymes, leading to some hook-croonin' by Unig. The flip is a bit slower and more sinister, the "battle" cut to balance the a-side's 'conscious/introspective" cut. Neither is amazing, but both are solid. Pete Babb

#### NG ARTISTS CREW MOTIVATE SAC Records/US/12

If you're into the Ugly Duckling school of feel-

then you'll love this record. The funky beats bang on "Motivate," an uptempo party rocker with happy raps, excellent scratches and some nicely flipped Kane and Kool Keith samples. The flipside's "Organic Chemistry" is nothing short of gorgeous, with jazz horns and pianos to get you all sentimental. If you have to live in hip-hop's past, 1992's not a bad choice, Ross Hogg

#### Wide Hive/US/12

This split 12" from Wide Hive's upcoming remix album starts with Foreign Legion's DJ Design remixing DJ Zeph and Azeem's "Mirrors On Sand." Put it on and watch the dancefloor fill up to this clap-happy, guitar-driven remix (complete with new lyrics from Azeem). Keep them dancing with the bubblin' and bouncy Rockskin (a.k.a. actor Jon Abrahams) remix of Variable Unit's "Seven Grains" with MC Rubix. VU's "Dr. J Dub" gets the incredible Zeph treatment, complete with live horns, organ and bass. Ross Hoad

# MOTIF CLOTHING 2004





## **DRUM & BASS LABEL**

PROFILE: OFFSHORE apped as one of the bes bels of 2003, the Brooklyn pased Offshore Recordings nprint follows the path riginally forged by labels ike Certificate 18, Partisan Reinforced and classic era Metalheadz, Featurin nd Certificate 18 that I fee

can't dance to Offshore, but it's something you have to get your head around first in order to do so." With a number of singles on the way from Nucleus & Parado: Seha & Lenk, and ASC, Cleaver also has plans for the label's first full-length artist album this summer, courtesy of Intex Systems. Even more exciting is the split Resistance label. Taking cues from the punk tradition of split 7s, Cleaver and Ohm frontman Kurt Submerged have joined forces to push a series that covers the spectrum of drum & bass, with each of the six releases featuring an Ohm Resistance artist on one side and an Offshore artist on the flip. The response to the series' first slab has been overwhelming, so expect part two to surface soon, as well as a future collaboration involving Klute's Commercial Suicide imprint. "I plan on staying true to my vision," says Cleaver, "pushing the boundaries of a form of music that I love." Chris Muniz

#### BOYLAN EVERYBODY Square One/UK/12

Boylan gives you the warmth for this fifth slab on Bad Company's sublabel, with a hypnotizing soul chant of the title every four bars over dense, unobtrusive synths and surprising melodic patterns over a skittering rhythm. The flip's "Underground" goes all mean with skronky, squishy bass under a house diva ordering us to "Let me see you work." Yes, ma'am, Ron Nachmann

#### DISTORTED MINDS FEAT. FOXY OUCH D-Style/UK/12

A bit of solid-steel meaningful anger from these guys. In short, a bad, bad distorted wah-wah bass over a stomping riddim with a symphonic vamp every 24 bars and MC Foxy's inquisitive "Ouch?" catchphrase peeking in. And who would be on the flipside remix but Simon Bassline Smith, making it even more gritty for ya. Ron Nachmann

# **MATHEMATICS HERE AND NOW**

Social Studies/US/12

Mathematics launches their new label Social Studies with this well-calculated release. "Here and Now" kickstarts with a twisting electro synthline and echoing vocal spinnets before dropping in with chopped-up amen breaks, a deep rolling bassline, piano stabs and all the proper elements that we've grown to expect from this trio. The flipside, "Backdraft," comes even stronger, centered around a squelching synth alongside a wobbly bassline, handclaps and chiming keys. An auspicious start from a promising new labe Rvan Romana

#### **RONI SIZE BUMBAKITA** V/UK/12

So many times, so many of us have given up on this cat, and so many times he's come back with some sick shit. Case in point: "Bumbakita" lands directly on ya with a clean, almost tubular bassline and understated beat supporting an urgent wah-guitar-sounding melody and a lovely female rare-groove vocal sample. It's similarly no-nonsense on the flip's slightly slower "Fassy Ole," with basslines loudly but

bling and buzzing away. Your man's on point

# with this ish. Ron Nachmann

#### ON THE WATERFRONT/MAGNETIC

Science Fiction/UK/12

Accidental Heroes' imprint brings its first split single. Sonic & Silver's "On the Waterfront" rocks tumbling organic beats with some smacking snares before its sparkling bassline opens up with a gorgeously haunted flute vamp and a graceful breakdown. This sucker just keeps building and building. On the flip, Gridlok's "Magnetic" gives you a rhythm with a bit of a gangsta limp that comes off almost jazzy as it supports a buzzing bassline and shimmering electronics. Ron Nachmann

#### SPECIAL FORCES DIRTY

#### GOLDIE ANGEL III (LOXY & INK REMIX) Metalheadz/UK/12

Just for the hell of it. Metalheadz heaps on a couple by two of the figureheadz of the early days. As Special Forces, the one like Photek offers a flying hi-hat heavy organic stormer named "Dirty" that's sharp enough to revolve around a hand clap. The flip's "Satisfy" offers up soulful vocals and near-koto percussion over unfortunate heavy-metal synths. Meanwhile, the head Head gets his lovely "Angel" buried in Loxy & Ink's densely distorted remix, while his "Sinister" aets a bit more breathing room and better energy at the hands of Spirit. Ron Nachmann

# **CHRIS SU SATISFY**

Critical/UK/12

Critical comes correct with their latest release featuring Hungarian producer Chris Su. "Satisfy" is a rolling amen that will smash any dancefloor, blending soulful vocals, a booming bassline, funky quitar riffs and strong techy influences that start half way through the tune. Flip over to "Try Again" with an even deeper vibe and more soultech flavor reminiscent of Matrix's latest sound. The results equal the love child of liquid and neuro-funk. Rvan Romana



#### **DAVID BORSU MONSTER** Counterpoint/UK/12

The man who remixed Perry Hemus's recent "Rhodesmode" tune comes through with a fourtrack EP for London's Counterpoint label. "Way of Life" starts off warm and breezy, while "Nocturne" is a chilled delight for the heads. The tempo moves in a funky electro direction with "Hustle The Funk" and the title track ends it all with a broken jazz style and delicate vocals. Borsu is set to drop two longplayers this year, so look out. Velanche

#### DAMN! LEAVING THIS PLANET A BOSSA ELETRICA VEJA O SOL Raw Fusion/SWE/12

Stockholm's Raw Fusion kicks off 2004 with the goods. The Damn! Collective outta Sweden handles its live cover of Charles Earland's "Leaving This Planet" and does the tune justice. The mysterious Yam Who extends the track, kicking up the drums for the dancefloor, Fellow Swedes A Bossa Eletrica's "Veia O Sol" is a bouncy tropical delight that's very Brazil, while London's Spiritual South adds heavier drums, synth bass and Rhodes keys for after-hour romping. The Swedish invasion continues Velanche

#### DAVE DO GATO EL DIABLO Fluid Ounce/UK/12 NERY BAUER DIANA BY CANDLELIGHT

Fluid Ounce/UK/10

The dB boyz raid Brazil! "El Diablo" from Do Gato is an absolute monster track that'll creep up on you without warning and send you towards a satisfying conclusion, while the flip's "The Other Side" is chill-out gone rough and busy. Nerv Bauer's "Diana By Candlelight" is a loving slice of jazz-laced melancholy. The flip, "Mercado Do Porto," is an uptempo jazz shaker with enough bass and beats to happily wear you out. Massive and essential quality music from Fl. Oz! Velanche

#### MAURACHER ZOMBIELOVE

Fabrique/AUS/12

Austria's Fabrique releases the second single from Hubert Mauracher's "29 Degrees" album. "Zombielove" features deliciously raspy vocals from Aminata building up the instrumentals with percussion galore. Ninja Tune's Bonobo gets his remix going with jazzed-up midtempo drums, live bass and greater emphasis on the flute. "Kava," mean while, goes for stripped-down dubstep with slightly heavier drums that move and groove, "Shine" is a slow-burner with an atmospheric feel and shuffling beats. Yes yes, sing that zombie song! Velanche

## NOSTALGIA 77 RAIN WALK

Tru Thoughts/UK/7

On the eve of Nostalgia 77's debut long-player for Tru Thoughts comes "Rain Walk," a spooky lil' downbeat head-nodder with hip-hop beats, generous guitars and nice key riffs. On the flip side. "Thing" gets busy on the funk with heavy, heavy beats and a mad groove that could make a corpse move, complete with horns courtesy of labelmate Quantic Funky? You better believe it Velanche

### ATCHWORKS IMMO

Q-Tape/FRA/12

Bruno Hovart drops his second EP for the Paris-based Q-Tape label, "Immo" falls between mellow house and Afrobeat with nice grooves and soothing vocals. After the mellow interlude "Million Toes" comes the funky disco track "Corn Bread" with hand claps, Fender grooves and melodic kevs. Crusho remixes the tune, lowering the tempo, fattening the kick drums and adding some electro bass. Sylvester Over flips things into house mode with straight 4/4 beats over warm atmospheres and grimy undercurrents. Tastv. Velanche

#### SHADE OF SOUL GIVE IN TO ME

Sunny Side/FRA/12

Hold on to your hats-this one's huge! With their premier single getting banged by everyone from Spinna to Alex Attias, Shade of Soul returns with an irresistible broken-soul beauty. The original and r&b mixes are great, but 4Hero takes it to another level with restrained Rhodes balanced by exquisite syncopation. As the stellar Marilyn David sings, "Make it sexy..." Peter Nicholson



shopping around without any luck, which was a shame, since their sound

is very refreshing by Dutch standards. That's when I said to them, 'I'll release it, and 4lux was born." Since then, the label's unleashed material by homegrown Dutch talents Amplified Orchestra and Switchstance,

alongside one-offs by vocalist Natalie Gardiner and West London biggie Phil Asher, But Gerd's focus remains at home: "The most important thing

is that Holland has a platform for people to express themselves creatively.

4lux is not only a collective of musicians but also of people organizing club

nights, doing art and all that." Check for the label's new single by Zimpala,

"Pas Meme Le Cri de L'un Oiseau" (out now, with remixes by Jimpster

and Kettel), alongside its first compilation, featuring Phil Asher, Amplified Orchestra, Flowriders, Switchstance and others. *Ron Nachmann* 

# FUTURE JAZZ **LABEL PROFILE:**

om the burgeoning a.k.a. Gerd)-the author of classic late-'90s



















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#### 2-STEP GUEST REVIEWS: J DA FLEX

Like the man himself says, "You ain't ready for J Da Flex." And you truly ain't ready for this BBC Radio 1Xtra DJ star, even if he has been on the UK garage set since 1996. J's done it all, including working for fabled London vinyl stores Blackmarket and Uptown; spinning prize nights like Cookies and Cream, Forward and Fabric (alongside raves like Lords of the Underground); and spinning across Europe and the American East Coast. Many of you already know the man from his remix work for labels Middlerow, V2, Ignorance and Defected (for whom he darkened up the Kings of Tomorrow's "Finally").
He's also part of the DJ arm of the dubstep pioneers Ghost Crew, on whose label he released the ultrakinetic "Breaktastic" EP. If you want to know what's brewing in the UKG, you'd best check both his Underground Knowledge show on BBC 1Xtra (www. bbc.co.uk/1xtra). Also, look for the relaunch of his South West label, which has recently received tracks from Japan and Austria. This is truly a worldwide ting, but let the man tell you what's runnin' locally. Ron Nachmann

#### MARK ONE STARGATE 92 Rephlex/UK/12

Mark at his best? Possibly! When Mark was scouted by the highly acclaimed Rephlex Records to do this mix, they knew exactly what they were looking for. Intricate edits and programming are this guy's specialties. This Manchester-born producer is gonna be big for 2004! Watch this space!! JDF

# STATIC CHARGE (ALL STARS VOCAL MIX) white/

To be honest with you, I slept on this record. I was sent a test-press three months ago but didn't pay much attention to it until I heard the All Stars mix recently. It features the cream of UKG MCs, including 1Xtra's Heartless, B-Live, God's Gift, Gemma Fox and many more. With recognition throughout the scene plus airplay on 1Xtra's play list, this is bound to be a massive hit. JDF

# ZED BIAS FEAT. SIMBA COOL OPERATOR white/

Over the past three or four years, Dave Jones (a.k.a. Zed Bias) has been one of the scene's most prolific producers. This collaboration with Simba simply blows me away. The combination of sweet vocals, tight beats and banging bass is enuff to get anyone going. Pay attention!! *JDF* 

#### **BENGA & SCREAM AFRICA**

#### Bia Apple/UK/12

Croydon's troublesome teenagers represent the Southside with another floor-quaker. Unveiled by Hatcha during Tempa's winter break, Big Apple has upped the ante on deep South minimal dubstep, unleashing both the on-fire Digital Mystikz and the soon-to-come Loefa. On this plate. Skream goes all Afro-technik while Benga perfects his low swung bounce bass. Fruity Loops runnin' red. Kode9

#### Botchit/UK/12

On his first release for Botchit in a couple of vears. Carter throws down in his dependable tech-breaks stylee. The title rolls a laidback-vetsharp, synth-driven rhythmic vibe that supports a long, chimerical, bluesy soul vocal. The flipside's "Udon" goes more minimally funky for the floor with occasional dramatic spotlights on the drum fills and some twinkly electronic bits sprinkled over the whole arrangement. Carter = quality, as usual. Ron Nachmann

#### BEFORE YOU BREAK ON ME

# M Theory/UK/12

Down Under hits us with a proggy breaks track by Melbourne boys Luke Chable and Jono Fernandez on Bedrock Breaks man Jonathan Lisle's new imprint. This thing comes at you midtempo, but with strongly spitting snares and deep atmospherics that take you soaring on the original mix. The flipside's remix sees the pair strip things down and lead you to a novel, distorted downtempo breakdown before taking it back home. Chargin'. Ron Nachmann

#### FLAVA COLLECTIVE FEAT. LITTLE ONE IT'S MY PI FASIIRE

#### Bia Bov/UK/12

By adding a stealthy bassline and elastic rhythm. Big Boy head honcho Al Adams and NNM Productions give a big, bad underground UKG boost to this jazzy hip-hop swinger. The guys tweak singer Rosena Khan's exotic chant of the title and give good space to highlight Little One's tight and quick rhyme skills. A funky breath of fresh air. Ron Nachmann

# JDS DON'T BE ALONE

#### RENNIE PILGREM DEFENDER TCR/UK/12

UK breaks hotshots TCR come around with another no-nonsense pair of vinyl weapons to ring in the new year. Darren Pearce and Julian Napolitano-yes, the same JDS who scored a hit with 1997's "Nine Lives"-crank out a mother of a title track with singer Valerie M's unpredictable lyrics floating over an ever-varying rhythm-andatmosphere arrangement. Capitalizing on the new retro wave, the flip's "Blackout" brings back those early-'90s acidic memories with a hysterical breakdown. Meanwhile TCR big-cheese Pilgrem cranks up symphonic and guitar sample sand live bass for a big-building, expertly structured, psychedelic breaks track from his upcoming album. As usual, he comes off tight as fuck. Ron Nachmani

# COLOURS (AUTOMATE RMX)

After a round of house remixes, Serbian producer Ogi Cash gets his downtempo, Moloko-ish track re-rubbed in a surprising deep breaks style by western UK prog-house don Si Gordon. Working as Automate, Gordon jabs at an ever-changing breakbeat and long-note bassline with extrate

restrial electronics that swirl around SoFine's calm vocals. Didn't know Gordon had the breaks thing in him, but there ya go. Ron Nachmann

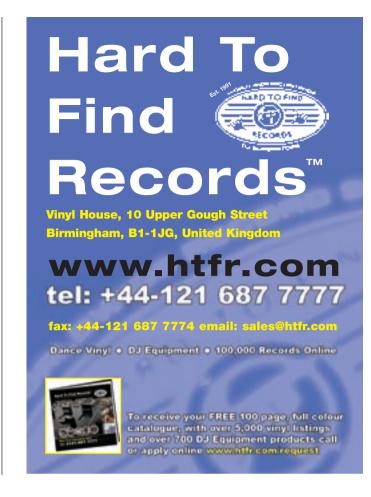
#### Finger Lickin'/UK/12

Robin 12Tree and Jason Laidback open Finger Lickin's '04 season by following up the thumpingly funky "Slippedy Slide" with another stabbing bit of breaks hoo-doo. The title track's understated electro accents, sublimated acid melodies and hip-hop vocal samples accentuate its squirming bassline and stomp-along beat. Meanwhile the flipside's "That's It" hands over your recommended daily allowance of sub-bass. synth stabs and orgasmic breakdowns. Bravo.

#### WILEY WHO ATE ALL THE PIES? white/HK/12

On the verge of big things with his spit-drenched, riddim-racked debut album release in 2004, Wiley Kat follows the refrain invented on his subby 9/11 tribute, "Ground Zero," adding a customary layer of Chinese kitsch melody to derange its original hollow mournfulness. While Dizzee stepped up with a bang, Wiley's comin' with a micro-genre all of his own: eskibeat! Kode9





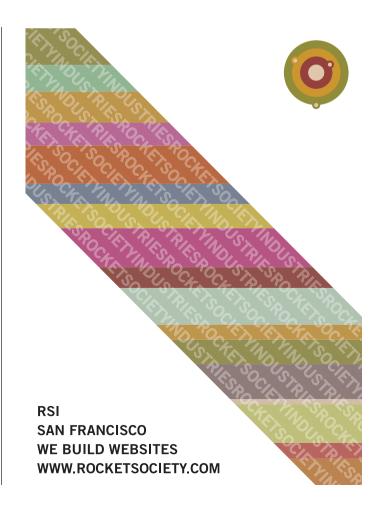


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ed in Greenpoint, Brooklyn in 1990, just v folks like Nettle and Raz Mesinai

along with his debut DJ Olive album, Bodega. Besides releases by his downtemp project Lunchbox and a solo EP, "Gorilla Bay" (both coming out on the Agriculture this spring), Asch will also release two "vinyl scores" on the PhOnOmena label, one of which is a collab with musique concrete master Luc Ferrari. So how the hell did

JOHN FAHEY HARD TIME EMPTY BOTTLE BLUES (1-4) Table of the Elements/UK/12 Once you figure out the b-side is not a Jansky Noise remix but actually uncut with a thick ink drawing on it, you can play this picture disc, made up of four tracks recorded in 1996 at the Yttrium Festival and released fall 2003. It's pressed quite loud, so it's good to mix into instrumentals or slice into house. Fluid, rolling solo

#### WAYNE MARSHALL GET IT ON TONIGHT 40-40/JA/7

Lenky sneaks out an acid dancehall full-frequency booty riddim. Mad vocal sample going round the block stirring up the locals. This is street-hard and sweet psychedelia, a rough and rugged dancehall version. Drives along real nice, bringin' out the boot-shaker in all of us. Odd and full of restraint, but still powerful

#### T.RAUMSCHMIERE RABAUKENDISKO Novamute-Shitkatapult/UK/12

For me, this 12" is all about that Bug dancehall remix. This is some preemptive riotous thrasher squelch funkhall. Shock and awe when daddy comes back home to the suburbs and finds the little wee ones tearing a rude hole in his "home entertainment centerrrr" with this. Sounds fuller than the normally thin sound of breakcore, but still, this production is all about meters into the red, baby. DJO

#### FUNCKARMA DEMSONGZBYWE On/NFTH/12

quitar blues, DJO

Dutch bros Don and Roel Funcken, known for their electronic hip-hop and reggae-inspired releases under numerous aliases, hand over a couple of edgy, almost desolate rhythmic remixes of various artists' tunes. On the main side, they give electro-acoustic band Ontayso's "Score of an Imaginary Iceland" a respectfully crisp slobeat treatment before taking Céline's "Here and Now" to a murmuring, granular dub cavern. On the flip, the boys digitally stretch out and bunch up Detroit knob-twiddler Kero's "Bent" inna Warp style, and give fellow Dutchboy Slemper no quarter by putting his "Soccermummy" in some cloudy radiowave-funk ether. Good goodness on

#### DELIA GONZALEZ & GAVIN RUSSOM EL MONTE DFA/US/12

Artist/performer/synth-playing couple Gonzalez and Russom come at you with two Tangerine Dream-evoking beatless tech bombs under the supervision of New York men-of-the-moment DFA. Clocking in at a staggering 14.5 minutes. the title track here pecks at you hypnotically for its first half before suddenly landing deep in a briar patch of interweaving melodies; by the end, it extracts itself into its initially Glassian origin. Flip for DFA's late-'80s darkwave-inspired remix of 'Rise," all steadfast machine beats and ominous analogue waves. Delectable. Ron Nachmann

### JUNIOR BOYS HIGH COME DOWN

#### KIN/IIK/12

How did these Canuck pop-dance sensations figure to follow their overnight European hit EP "Birthday"? For one thing, get that tune remixed by fellow cheesehead Manitoba, who applies his tweaked-out, scratchy-slippy flavor to the heartfelt minimal classic. But what about the Spacek-meets-New Order grace of the title track, the Kraftwerky mobility of "Under the

Sun" and the satisfying ambience of "A Certain Association"? What indeed Can we actually wait until their album comes out or must we liberate the masters from the Kin label's headquarters as they're made? Bosul Ekter

## KETTEL CUDDLE AND THEN LEAVE

#### DUB/NETH/12

Dutch wunderkind Reimer Eising follows up his excellently titled "Look At This Ha! Ha!" EP with a similar grab bag of orchestral-electronic styles. Put aside any comparisons you've heard between this cat and Plaid or AFX and just check this on its merits. Few can make percussive stumbling sound as resolutely jazzy as Eising does on the a-side's "Any Waken Sly Blonda." or Disneyesque electronic naivete sound as intriguing as on "Prairieplant." Dude is confoundingly unique. Ron Nachmann

#### VERTICAL CAT HEAVEN

#### Achingly Responsive/US/12

What is there to say about a tune made up of a huge harp vamp that seems lifted straight out of the intro to "Boogie Nights" slathered over a buzzy. orchestral synth bassline and a proto-drum & bass rhythm? "Hell," that's what, which is the fitting title of the grunge/electro/jazz flipside of this masterpiece of beat-geekery. "Shut the fuck up, will ya?" crows the vocal sample in "Hell"'s breakdown, and we couldn't agree less. Ron Nachmann

#### CHRISTOPHER WILLITS LITTLE EDO Nihhle/US/7

12k label artist and San Francisco local Willits here puts down a 7" single of folded guitars and steamy, staticky clicks popping under the lovely, manipulated voice of soul/deep house singer Latrice Barnett on the a-side; with a largely instrumental reprise of the track on the flip. Good stuff, but limited; don't miss it at www.nibblerecords com Bosul Ekter



#### My Long Winter's Rant...

Sometimes there's just nothing left to do but head out in the rain to the zoo and watch the lemurs leap from tree to tree for an hour or two, then retire to Doggie Diner for a corndog. I love me some winter. Anton LaVey has a great essay in The Devil's Notebook about hating summer and celebrating the gloom and rain of winter. Winter is the time to shed your pain and regrets like a snake crawling out of a bad handover. emerging fresh and aware as a newborn baby duckling (as the Princess used to say), ready to pounce on an unsuspecting world with a notebook full of plans and ideas. The cold and rain have a clarifying effect I find most satisfying. Of course, I like the long nights, too. Being nocturnal, that just means more primetime in my life, and who's not with that? Few things piss me off more than the sun bursting through and ruining a perfectly good stormy day. I'm all for floods, landslides and blackouts. I should just move to La Honda right now and live the fantasy like Chanel No.5.

But winter in the Bay Area also offers some fascinating anomalies... Like how after a week of torrential downpours, you wake one morning to the brightest and clearest sky ever, and folks move their easy chairs out onto the sidewalk to soak up the rays...Or how (if one were so inclined) you could surf a 60-foot wave at Mavericks in the morning and then snowboard over a moving freight train in the afternoon outside of Truckee up in the Sierras. A lovely land we live in, full of endless possibilities and adventure! And fish tacos from Papalote. And militant pedestrians. And good tunes to play at a seemingly ceaseless array of cool little bars, where the drinks are free and you're only a bus ride away from home... Forward, friends...

1) ROY AYERS "BABY DOLL" (BBE/FRA/12) Three or four years ago, we unveiled the Roy Cocktail to an unsuspecting public at the Roy Ayers gig at the North Beach Jazz Festival. A pint glass full of ice, Malibu rum and pineapple juice topped off with Skyy Vodka. Drink that, listen to this, and you'll see what I mean! Wicked disco/funk from one of

2) CODEK TESTDRIVE VOL.1 (Codek Europe/SWI/2x12) This is a new series from the In Flagranti lads, teaming up with different musicians to rock a typically wide array of tempos and styles. My joint is "Stadt Der Untoten Idioten" (What'd you just call me?!), which would slide in lovely with that Roy Ayers track up at #1, but I'm also having fun flipping the companion pieces "Deodorietre Sklaven" and "Huhnerbratapparate," which sound like "Love's Gonna Getcha" on quadudes Good fun

3) FOUR TET "AS SERIOUS AS YOUR LIFE" (JAYDEE REMIX FEAT. GUILTY SIMPSON) (Domino/US/12) The indie-rockin' album version is cool enough, but handed over to the man J-Dilla, this one just jumps. Nice soulful vocals and rap from Guilty, too. And peep those fuckin' cuts, yo! Damn.

4) J-BOOGIE'S DUBTRONIC SCIENCE "MOVIN' TO MY BEAT (ZEPH REMIX)" (0m/US/12) Again, it's not like J-Boog's original mix was broke, but you gotta hear the old-school handclap party vibe that my man Zeph brings to this People Under the Stairs rap. This guy's just waiting to blow the hell up!

5) BACKYARD BANGERS "PERCEPTION" (Transistor/US/12) This is what happens when E. Moss from NYC (Atmos/ Mo' Wax) gets together with The Troublemaker from LA (Celestial): some twisted-ass shit. "Perception" is a brooding cut 'n' paste hip-hop track that almost boils over into drum & bass programming, but keeps it in the 90bpm range. The I-Wolf remix of "Opposite Direction" is the jam here, though-a big & heavy, brokenelectro number that fills the bass bins.

6) MEDAPHOAR "WHAT U IN IT FOR" (Stones Throw/US/12) A pair of hittin' tracks from Med, with production by Oh-No and Madlib. My money's on the a-side for a change, and Stones Throw just keeps droppin' underground hits...

7) THE EARL LOADED ENSEMBLE (Footlong Development/US/LP) Fat jazziness reminiscent of Asheru & Blue Black's production from LA studio jock/DJ The Earl. "The Proof" and "Unreal"

8) THE OPUS BREATHING LESSONS (Mush/US/CD) It's driving music, it's midnight tea music, it's even nappy-time music... Like standing barefoot on the rusty lip of a hulking iron bridge and releasing yourself into the mysteries of the green Chicago River below.

9) NICKNACK "IMPROVING SILENCE" (Crowd Control/US/CD & 12EP) Speaking of sunrise and instrumental hip-hop...REALLY lovely stuff from North Dallas, with loads of guest musicians and even a few sultry vocals...For fans of Wide Hive or classic Giant Step sounds.

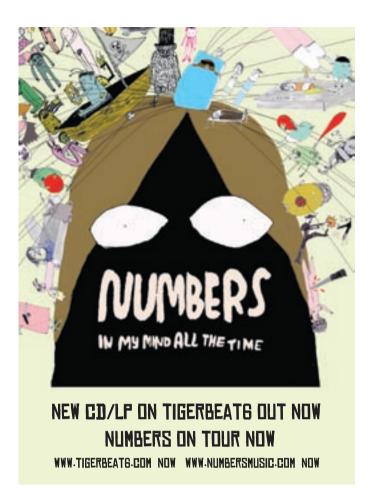
10) DEEP DICKOLLECTIVE "MOVIN" (Agitprop-Sugartruck/US/7) Two new and improved tracks from Oakland's multi-talented gay/bi rappers D/DC. "Movin" is soulful and groovy while the b-side takes it into some jazzed up drum & bass. Yum! Check www.deep-dickollective. com for more on these cats

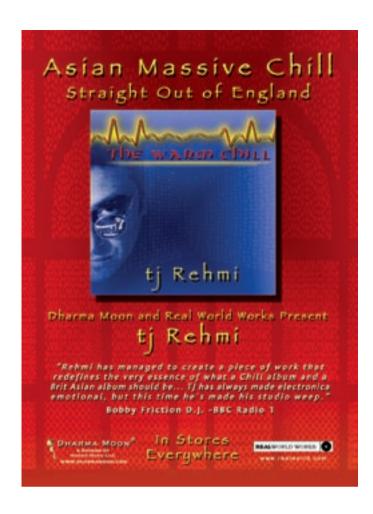
11) E. DA BOSS "ENTERTAINMENT" (Slept On/US/7) Another killer 7" from Oakland. Digger, DJ and beatmaker E. Da Boss drops a solid beat for King Eljen and Kensho to flow over on one side, while on the flip, Nick Andre and DJ Jerk lay down the haunting "Romantic Era" instrumental. Go ahead, mix in Robert Palmer's "In the Mood." I dare ya!

12) ROB SMITH "TRU RUB" (Grand Central/UK/12) Gut-punching electro breaks from one half of the fabled Smith & Mighty crew, on the fantabulous Grand Central label. Nice ragga soul on the a-side's "Angels in Poverty." LUCKY 13) CINNAMON "CAKES AND PIES" (Lewis/UK/12) OK.



who remembers the video game Parappa the Rapper? Straight Japana-cute and infectious as all hell. I want to record my own drunken version in a J-Town karaoke joint with Doze and Mark Herlihy, and then make photo-stickers and pass out in a hardware store.









Had Stanley Kubrick made a rock film, he may have envisaged it with bands existing in virtual space, communicating with a series of binary codes sent thousands of miles through phone lines on some info grid called The Internet.

Jump forward 30 years, hypothetically. Positioned somewhere beside avant hip-hopper Dabrye and techno evangelist Matthew Dear is an orb of shimmering noise known as Twine-Ghostly International's newest weapon in their plot to take over the world of electronic music.

Consisting of Baltimore's Greg Malcolm and San Diego's Chad Mossholder, Twine inhabits that ether world, transmitting digital whispers that culminate in airy, sample-based compositions worthy of early 4AD releases. Keeping in that ethereal vein, they've recently enlisted vocalist Allison Shaw from gauzy goth favorites The Cranes for an upcoming EP.

Currently, their self-titled record, the duo's first for Ghostly International, is making insurmountable waves in both the IDM and experimental techno communities. Twine's two-studio, cross-pollinating recording technique definitely has its share of intricacies. Here, a web chat with Malcolm and Mossholder provides insight into their creative process.

#### XLR8R: It seems like you both had a traditional music background to start with before electronic music.

**Chad Mossholder:** Greg and I started out in regular garage rock bands. We made some pretty odd music at the time. We mixed up all kinds of genres, from funk to punk and synth-pop. As a guitarist, Robert Fripp, Fred Frith, David Gilmour, and Syd Barrett heavily influenced me. But then I got into Brian Eno and Skinny Puppy and Herbie Hancock. And that was really my introduction to electronic music.

#### XLR8R: What did the earliest version of your studio consist of?

CM: Mine was an Ensoniq SD-1, my guitar and my cousin's four-track recorder. I made tons of weird stuff with that combination. Oh, and I used a tape deck as my sampler. I'd record weird sounds and sync them up with the four-track. It was pretty funny. But it worked at the time.

Greg Malcolm: I started off with an Akai MPC-2000, which I'm still convinced was one of the best sampler/sequencers ever. I was doing tracks in less than a week out of the box. I had a SCSI zip drive, a Korg Prophecy mono-synth and a Roland 505 drum machine. I later upgraded to a Korg ER-1, Waldorf Pulse-Synth, guitars and a pair of Technics with a sampling mixer. I used to use it as an on-thefly loop sampler live. Crazy how spoiled we are now with software.

#### XLR8R: What software did you use on the Ghostly record?

GM: We used Sound Forge 6.0 to do most of the editing and sampling. For instrument recording, Vegas Pro 4.0 and Sound Forge were used. Ableton Live 3.0 was used in various ways to tweak and Reason 2.0 was also used in the process.

#### XLR8R: What does each studio consist of currently?

GM: Main rack-mount PC with a Darla soundcard, Desknote PC with an M-Audio Firewire 410 soundcard, MIDI synths, Technics turntables, Korg ER-1 drum machine, Doepfer pocket dial MIDI controller, old tape deck, Sony MD recorder, guitar, Audix monitors and Mackie mixers...simple and effective studio set-up.

CM: Well, mine is a G4 laptop, a PC desktop, a Waldorf Pulse synth, a Sherman filter bank, a Motu 828 soundcard, an Alesis 4 Midiverb, a Mackie mixer, a set of Event studio monitors, two guitars and a bass guitar. That's pretty much it.

# XLR8R: How does it work with the two of you in different places? Is one

GM: No, nothing like that. A track will start off some place and then gets fleshed out in the bouncing back and forth.

#### XLR8R: And how do you go about sharing files?

CM: We have an FTP site for transferring data back and forth. We also use the good old US postal service. We talk on the phone and over instant messenger every day, so we are constantly up-to-date on what each other is doing.

#### XLR8R: What effect does making music across the Internet have on vour production? Does it influence songwriting?

GM: Nothing will replace working side by side with someone. We got into working like this as a way to transcend the limits of location after we moved away from being roommates. I think it affects our songwriting in a less direct way. Often Chad and I work with unfinished statements that are given meaning from

#### XLR8R: Do you talk out a general plan when you go into the studio?

CM: At times Greg and I plan out a sort of map for a track. But usually tracks like to take on a life of their own. They know where they want to go. They just need assistance getting there.





#### ASK ROBOTSPEAK

It's XLR8R's tip-tastic gear advice column, where our readers put their most perplexing questions to SF music technology experts at computer music shop RobotSpeak

Got a question about your bedroom studio or DJ gear? Simply send it to: askrobotspeak@xlr8r.com and your answer will appear in next issue!

#### Dear RobotSpeak

Yes, my vinyl days are over. Not only do I no longer have the room for my wax collection, I have a serious new technology bug. I'm trying to decide between Traktor and Final Scratch. What's your favorite of these two? How long will it take me to encode all my records? Should I just wait for an iPod DJ mixer? So many questions...

Oliver a.k.a. DJ OT, San Diego, CA

More than anything, Traktor DJ studio provides non-DJs a way to mix their tracks and automatically beatmatch them into a set. Personally-because, hey, I am until now an "under-experienced" vinyl DJ-that feature alone makes Traktor worth the price. Add to that its filters and MIDI implementation, and Traktor is nothing short of had-ass

Final Scratch, on the other hand (which, incidentally, uses a simplified version of Traktor as its graphical user interface), still uses real vinyl as its control surface. This is why so many "real" DJs are incorporating Final Scratch into their arsenal, I say "incorporating" because nothing need be replaced. Final Scratch lets you play your existing vinyl collection right alongside your digitized files, and digitizing your vinyl is a timeconsuming pain in the ass. No way around it. If you are like most DJs, you own a stupid amount of vinyl. It's going to take you a long time to record it. Final Scratch will allow you to gradually make the transition to digital, slowly making more room in your apartment and the trek to the club easier on your back. Also, if you desperately need that annoying Chingy song for a last-minute set but can't stomach actually paving for it on wax, it's a guick 99-cent iTunes download and your set is set.

Something to note: some respectable DJs (including my flatmate) have commented that Final Scratch degrades the sound quality of their vinyl playback. If you're a stickler for fidelity, you may want to give it a test run before making your final decision. -Alan RobotSpeak



# ALL THE WAY LIVE

The mad professors over at Ableton have upgraded their innovative time-warping sequencer with new features, making Live 3.0 easier and more efficient to use, and expanding its capabilities. At first glance, the skinable interface looks pretty much the same as before. but a little digging around will reveal significant improvements. One of Live's best features is its capacity to warp a sampled sound into something new, and Live 3 expands on this concept by allowing more in-depth tweaking. The software lets you draw exactly how you want nanning, volume, pitch and effect controls to work

inside of the actual sample (rather than after the sample's in the sequencer), without altering the actual sample on your hard drive. It's easy to come up with drastic results here; turning any kind of sound sample or beat into an unrecognizable electronic groove is a snap once you get your brain around how the program loops your samples. Live is already known as one of the best tools for mixing electronic elements with varying tempos and musical personalities, and Live 3 is showing how useful and creative the software can be in the studio. With a little more detail added to the editing and mixing features, and a few additions-such as the ability to use VST Instruments and Rex files-Live could soon make traditional sequencers like Cubase and Pro Tools obsolete as well. Jesse Terry

MSRP: \$399: www.ableton.com

# SOUND ON THE GO

Mixing desk companies have finally figured it out-people want gear to go. Producers want to be able to mix, edit or record in a cabin in Coos Bay or on a beach in Bangkok. Joining the ranks with tiny devices like the Behringer UB-802 or JL Cooper's CS-32 minidesk, the Soundcraft Compact 4 micromixer is engineered to make life easier for the mobile recording fiend or the work space-challenged.

This neatly arranged four-input mixer serves as a basic interface to route any input (like your guitar or CD player) to a record output line (to your computer) by selecting a record button on the channel; in other words, just plug in and go. Compact 4 has all the standard "ins": direct input (or DI) for instruments, mic input, stereo RCA inputs for turntables or MiniDisc as well as two-count 'em. two-headphone jacks, so you and your engineering partner can listen to a mix simultaneously. And, like any standard DJ mixer, there's a blend-monitoring capability that lets you preview a channel and the main mix at the same time, which allows for better syncing of vocals and instruments. You can't do everything with this bad boy-no MIDI controlling or built-in effects-which makes this bare-bones business. But as the cliché goes, sometimes less is more. Except when it comes to SuperLotto, of course Tomas

MSRP: \$149.99: www.soundcraft.com



#### QUICKIE

#### PVDJ GRABBER

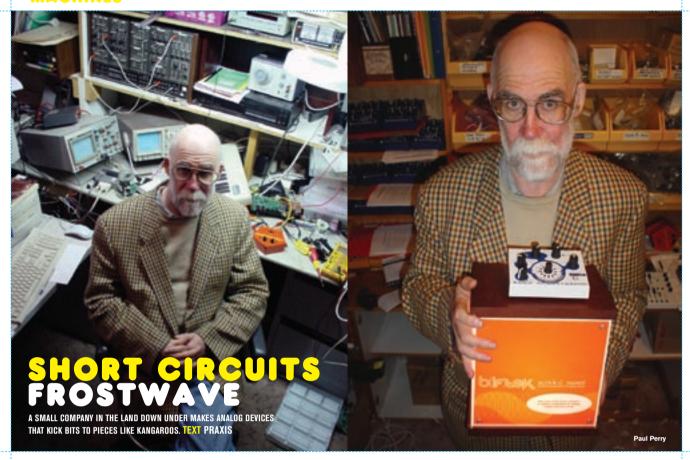
The Grabber sampling unit is a small, DJ-friendly tool that automatically creates a perfect loop by simply touching a button. It uses a built-in beat-per-minute counter that instantly syncs the loop to your mix tempo. By allowing guick, on-the-fly looping, DJs can extend mixes and do their own breakdowns and build-ups. The Grabber features built-in effects that include reverse play and stutter effects, and can handle up to six sample loops at up to 16 beats total at BPM ranges from 60 to 230 BPM Nice one PVDII Nice one-nice one-nice-nice-nice-ni-ni-ni-ni-n-n-nnnnnnnnnn Tomas

PROS: One-step sampling and looping make for more energetic DJ sets. CONS: A bit expensive for beginners.

MSRP: \$299: www.pvdi.com

13 \$XLRRR

#### MACHINES



Australia is known mainly for kangaroos and emu, but the innovative hardware units Australian Paul Perry builds at home are equally eclectic animals. Despite the full-on assault of computer and software technology, Perry's Frostwave company continues to fight the analog battle, building exclusive synth-based effect pedals and analog hardware sequencers/controllers.

Employing a small staff of three, Frostwave pushes the envelope of audio innovation, leaving their competitors generations behind with zero imitation. In the tradition of great engineers such as Moog, ARP and Oberheim, each effect unit is handcrafted and contains loads of audio and control-voltage inputs for synths and modular systems.

In addition to their filter replica, the Resonator (inspired by the Korg MS20), Frostwave has also created one of the first software modeling analog hardware units, the Sonic Alienator. This little beast has more distortion crunch and crude "bit-crush" capabilities than any software plug-in available today.

#### XLR8R: How long have you been building electronic circuits?

Paul Perry: Frostwave has been going for about ten years now. When I started off, I had been collecting analog synths for a number of years, back when people were chucking them out, after the digital DX7 appeared. I'm not a musician—in fact, I'm not even interested in music! But I'd always wanted an analog computer, and when I saw a Korg MS20 in a pawnshop I fell in love. After a while, I had a pretty big pile of synths and, naturally, no way to play them. So I thought of getting a MIDI-to-control-voltage converter so I could sequence them off Sequencer Plus on an early PC. The first couple of engineers I paid to design a converter just ran off with the money and spent it on dope! Anyway, I was just sitting in my office, and a stranger walked in and asked what I was doing. I told him the whole sorry tale and he said, "Four channel MIDI to CV converter? That should be easy, once I find the MIDI specs. A week's work tops." Well, I never thought I'd see him again, but imagine my surprise two weeks later when he'd done it! And so that was the first product, the Frostwave Quad MIDI-CV converter.

# XLR8R: What do you feel are the major pros and cons of the time-fabled hardware versus software argument?

**PP:** A lot of the comparison synth argument is pointless. In one way, the battle is over, because there are so many more virtual synths. The big problem is real-time tweaking, and a failure to allow enough simultaneous audio-in and out links, but that isn't insufferable. Physical interfaces to virtual synths can only get better. Naturally, for anyone brought up with knobs, there is no substitute. From a manufacturer's viewpoint, there is an enormous advantage with hardware, which is that you can't copy it onto a disk for your mates!

# XLR8R: Can you please explain in general the function of your latest product, the Sonic Alienator?

**PP:** The Sonic Alienator has three main aspects: a resonant analog filter, a variable sample rate digitizer and a digital signal manipulator. We make it so people can perform the "bit crushing" or "decimation" without a computer. This is an interesting case of something that was originally a purely computer algorithm being ported to hardware! There are 24 different bit-modification algorithms built in, giving various forms of distortion and modification, which can be combined with the analog filter before or after the digital section. And you can vary the bit rate down to quite a low frequency, which acts as a low-pass filter and also generates "aliasing" effects, depending on the input signal.

# XLR8R: With the synthesizer world rapidly moving towards the software demise, what kindles your desire to build modular synthesis-based effect pedals?

**PP:** Well I have always been contrarian, and I come from the era of knobs. I'm certainly not Mr. Computer. I honestly feel that it is more fun plugging stuff together on the table.

# XLR8R: Your Resonator filter pedal is a clone VCF from the famed Korg MS20 synth. Why choose to recreate this filter and not a filter from a Moog, Oberheim or ARP?

**PP:** The MS20 filter is a good sound, and a flexible one. Admittedly, I never heard a filter I didn't like, but I just have a soft spot for the MS20. Also, there have certainly been some great musicians who have used the MS20. www.frostwave.com, www.bigcitymusic.com







# THE NEW INDUSTRY STANDARD HAS FINALLY ARRIVED



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Sexy, sexy, sexy. That's how I would describe what I saw at the 2004 winter NAMM conference. That is, if my editors hadn't banned me from using the word "sexy" to describe gear. In their opinion, there's nothing sexy about this stuff. It can be "ground breaking," "shiny," or even "fantastic," but you cannot consider an adjective implying you are attracted physically to to these little sex machines. Seems a little close-minded, seeing as these instruments are responsible for creating glorious tones akin to nothing less than pure aural sex! Anyway, we travelled around the halls of the Anaheim convention center and peeped some pretty amazing new-and dare I say, sexy-stuff. Here's a quick snapshot of what we saw. Andrew Smith



nes! The Shure E3c (top) and E5c (left) earphones are earplugs with amazingly high-fidelity sound.









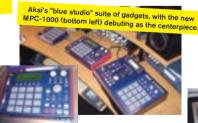






Korg's new Electripe models received a race lift (top) and their Kaoss Pad entrancer now handles video and audio. Also, their Legacy collection of virtual instruments ships with the amazingly







The big announcement from Tascam's DJ lineup was the TT-M1 oller (below), which controls their CD-X1500 or





It's a mixer! It's a turntable! It's both! The Vestax FO developed by QBert (above) and the big knobs of the PMC-CX Carl Cox Signature Mixer (left).

left) with monitor support and Cleveland

the Fantom X7 workstation.

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VIS-ED LUCA IONESCU
A VECTOR PRODIGY FROM DOWN UNDER OR AN INGENIOUS ILLUSTRATOR WIZARD? SYDNEY'S LUCA IONESCU DAZZLES WITH HIS MULTIFACETED APPROACH TO DESIGN. WORDS VIVIAN HOST

While the bulk of graphic designers are off doing hobo-like chickenscratch, clip art clusterfuck and graffiti (despite the fact that they've never written on a wall in their lives), 25-year old Luca lonescu confines his oeuvre to the clean, dynamic basics. That's not to say his work is simple, but when it comes down to choosing between classic and trendy, lonescu is bound to choose classic.

Born in Romania but based in Sydney, Australia since the age of 13, Ionescu is a thriving part of the Down Under design boom, which has also brought you the likes of Rinzen, Perks and Mini, Regular Product and the now-NYC-based Deanne Cheuk. His t-shirt and logo designs for companies like Mooks and Split subtly reflect these environs, with their bright color schemes and easy-flowing futurism. But lonescu's not all surf and sun: his work may have the playful pop of the UK's Designers Republic (a huge influence), but it also boasts razor-sharp fonts and an economy of line reminiscent of Swiss outfit Büro Destruct.

Ionescu is a busy, busy man. He can often be found at his Keep Left

design studio, pulling 12-hour days alongside partner Kevin Vo. When he's not doing corporate work for the likes of Coke or MTV, lonescu's busy appearing in books like Los Logos and IdN's Iconography. And in his precious spare moments, he's found the time to dabble in 3D design, cook up a clothing line (Hektik), and publish Refill, a quarterly collectable design magazine whose first issue featured Pete Fowler, Futura, Demo and Phunk Studio, among others.

When we caught up with this Adobe Illustrator wizard, he was antique shopping with his girlfriend, an avid pastime that often unearths unlikely design inspiration. Grappling with a testy trans-Atlantic phone line, he delivered his verdict on Australian fauna, fonts and design faux pas.

#### XLR8R: What inspiration do you derive from Australia?

Luca lonescu: Australia's got a lot of beautiful natural landscapes: a lot of trees, a lot of fauna. I like to bring that in color-wise. I like going out photographing a lot in the natural environment. I know camo has, globally, been

109 \$XLR8R



tried to incorporate elements of the Australian natural environment into the design to make it a little bit different.

#### XLR8R: Do you think there's a similarity between the work of the Australian designers?

LI: I think that the whole surf culture and beach culture has influenced a lot of people. But there are a lot of Australians doing the same stuff as people overseas-you know, everyone will be on to Swiss fonts or the whole hand-illustrated style. Australia has an easygoing kind of vibe and it's such a fresh country and a new country-it's only 100 or 200 years old-that you feel like you've got a fresh canvas and something to work with where you can make difference with what you create. Also, when I was growing up, my family lived quite a ways out in the suburbs, and that just made me want to get out of there and make something of myself.

#### XLR8R: What's the concept behind Refill?

LI: The idea was to have a really good design magazine where, when you actually invite an artist to be featured, you're giving them lots of room to

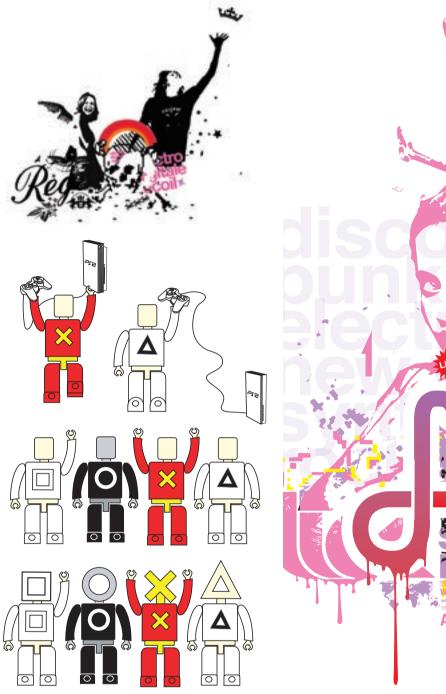
done quite a few times, but I've done a few pieces with camo where I display their work-two or three spreads instead of one column or a little corner. Also, in Australia, Refill only costs 20 dollars, and the thickness is the equivalent of something that would be worth 100 dollars. We wanted students to be able to buy it.

#### XLR8R: What are some of your favorite fonts of all time?

LI: I like Helvetica, Askidenz Grotesque and Futura, just because of their simplicity and timelessness. Whenever you use these fonts with the right kerning and the right spacing, they're always beautiful, and no matter what kind of image you add them to, they're complimentary.

#### XLR8R: On that note, what are some design elements or fonts that you never want to see again?

LI: Arrows died a little while ago, and I don't think anybody should bring them back. In graffiti arrows work as a symbol, and they should stay there, but I don't think they should be used in design. I'm also sick of crosshairs-those plus signs, like on technical drawings. And as a design style, I think we've got to move on from the whole \*wallpaper look with people doing illustrated silhouette outlines.





#### XLR8R: What's the most recent thing that you've acquired in XLR8R: Do you collect anything? vour office for inspiration?

'20s up until the '80s. It's amazing how some of the illustrations and the tor of Smurfs, she's got over 2,000. We've got a little display area in the logo design on these matchbooks are really tight. We've actually publounge room, so when clients come in they get to see our Smurfs and lished a little feature on them in the new Refill, so people will get a glimpse comic book collection. It's a little bit overwhelming. of the original designs in there and hopefully get some inspiration.

#### XLR8R: Between Büro Destruct, Designers Republic and Future Farmers, who has been a bigger influence?

LI: When I was younger, I went and met Ian Anderson from Designers Republic. That was a bit of a pilgrimage because I always respected his stuff. The stuff they did for [the videogame] Wipeout would have to be my favorite, as well as the stuff they did for Satoshi Tomiie's Full Lick album.

#### XLR8R: What are you listening to in the office right now?

LI: We're listening to Futurism 2, and a little bit of electro, guys like Felix overextend myself too far. Da Housecat and A.R.E. Weapons. Also some Aphex Twin and loungey www.kleft.com, www.refillmag.com kind of stuff.

LI: Rahan comic books from France and all sorts of Japanese toys and LI: A collection of 2,000 matchbooks—old stuff, all the way from the early manga, like Gundam robots and stuff. Also, my girlfriend is a huge collec-

#### XLR8R: In the future, what other projects would you like to be involved in?

LI: I've been doing more motion-graphics stuff, and I would like to collaborate with a few artists overseas on motion pieces. I also want to concentrate on Refill-there have been a lot of good things coming out of that collaboration-wise. And with the t-shirt label, I never put as much energy into it as I wanted to-I'd like to maybe pick that back up and do it properly. It's always good to have a few things on your plate to keep the challenge level and make it exciting, but I think I've learned not to

**SKLRRR 110** 111 \$XLRRR





# TBC KEITH KNIGHT

MEET A MAN WITH A POISON PEN WHO HELPED USHER IN THE YEAR OF THE BLACK CARTOONIST. WORDS TOPH ONE CARTOONS KEITH KNIGH

Keith Knight is a Renaissance man of mythic proportions. A full-time underground cartoonist whose fourth book, *Red, White, Black & Blue,* is out now from Manic D Press, he's also the verbalist for San Francisco's veteran live hip-hop group Marginal Prophets and a world-renowned pub-crawler. His work has been featured in The *SF Examiner, SF Weekly* and *ESPN Magazine*, and on *Africana.com*, *Salon.com* and many others.

Knight's also done work for Disney and Nickelodeon, and lectured on media, race and activism (with an emphasis on humor) at high schools and colleges across the land. For years, his work has been a groundbreaking mix of D.i.Y. urban youth culture and biting political commentary. His latest single-panel series, (th)ink, reflects one of the most outspoken voices against the insanity of the Bush occupation and post-9/11 American policies. All this with a loping Bohemian sense of sarcasm and a snappy wardrobe.

XLR8R: Are you the black Funky Winkerbean?

Keith Knight: I am the funky Wink Martindale.

## XLR8R: Favorite SF burrito joint and why?

**KK:** Two spots: Pancho Villa on 16th, between Mission and Valencia, for their fish tacos (they don't fry 'em in batter like down south). Six dollars for two and yer stylin'. And any of the taco trucks. "Salty" freakin' tasty good...

#### XLR8R: Tell us a good MUNI story.

KK: Too many of 'em to tell...One time I was on the 33 [bus] at the intersection of Haight and Ashbury (this was before they had streetlights there) and a motorcyclist being pursued by the cops blasted past the bus. He went into the intersection blind because the bus was right there and he ended up hitting the front of a car that hit the intersection at the same time he was going through. He flipped over the hood of the car, stumbled to the corner where everyone takes pictures of the Haight/Ashbury sign, and collapsed in a heap. Then, on that same bus line, 15 minutes later, a motorcyclist collided with a car at the intersection of 18th and Valencia. Half the people left the bus at that point because they thought it was cursed

#### XLR8R: What's up with your animation project for Nickelodeon?

**KK:** The Nick thing didn't get developed beyond the early stages. There was a little bit of animation and that's it. But it's a nice portfolio piece. Nowadays I'm working on some development stuff for Disney, doing a regular comic for the *ESPN* the magazine, plus the two [syndicated] comic strips. Various other freelance jobbies. But the

coolest thing is the new book, Red, White, Black & Blue. It's my first collection of (th)ink single-panel strips, and it's been receiving some great feedback.

XLR8R: You once mentioned that cats had better representation in cartoons than black folks. What got you into drawing and who are your main influences?

**KK:** Warner Bros. cartoons, *Mad Magazine*, P-Funk album covers, my cousin Joel, R. Crumb, Charles Schulz, Bill Watterson ("Calvin & Hobbes"), Garry Trudeau ("Doonesbury")...

#### XLR8R: Anything coming up for your rap group, the Marginal Prophets?

**KK:** We just finished up our latest disc, *Bohemian Rap CD*. We're selling through our website (*www.marginalprophets.com*) and at shows. But we're looking for someone to put it out for us. Look for a West Coast tour sometime in the spring or summer.

XLR8R: What do we need to do to get rid of Bush in 2004?

KK: Fucking vote. Take one goddamned minute to vote.

#### XLR8R: What are you listening to these days?

KK: I'm listening to a lot of the arguing my neighbors upstairs are doing.

XLR8R: You vs. Schwarzenegger in a ring, with tights...How about it?
KK: Oh man...That's too sexy, man.

#### XLR8R: What the hell is wrong with us Americans?

**KK:** Nothing. There's something wrong with America's current government. And they'll do anything they can to win again. Don't let them discourage you. Don't let them fool you. We can take this country back.

#### XLR8R: Top five of all time?

**KK:** 1. My wife's left boob. 2. Lobster roll at Kelly's Roast Beef, Revere, Massachusetts. 3. Prince, everything up through *Sign of the Times.* 4. *Star Wars.* 5. Run DMC, The Metro in Boston, circa 1983.

v.kchronicles.com



